SOVIET DEMOCRACY

by

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INTRODUCTION

DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP

INTRODUCTION

DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP

A VERY GREAT DEAL is being said and written nowadays about democracy and dictatorship. We repeatedly hear it said that democracy must be defended; and as an example of the kind of dictatorship of which we must beware the Soviet Union is often quoted. And yet, at the same time as this Soviet Union is described as a dictatorship, well-known people of different political views make statements which suggest that, in the Soviet Union to-day, there exists a system of government which possesses all the essential features of democracy.

Perhaps the most popular definition of democracy is that of Abraham Lincoln, who described it as "government of the people, by the people, for the people." And this is how the well-known students of public administration, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, write about the Soviet Union:

"The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics does not consist of a Government and a people confronting each other, as all other great societies have hitherto been . . . the U.S.S.R. is a Government instrumented by all the adult inhabitants, organised in a varied array of collectives, having their several distinct functions, and among them carrying on, with a strangely new

'political economy,' nearly the whole wealth production the country" (*Soviet Communism*, p. 450).

If this description is correct, then the Soviet Union would appear to conform to the commonly accepted definition of democracy. But Sidney and Beatrice Webb are well-known Socialists, and therefore their description and conclusions might be prejudiced. It is, therefore, all the more significant that another writer, who has never had any sympathy with Socialism, but who knew Tsarist Russia, has recently confirmed the impression given by the Webbs. This is Sir Bernard Pares.

Sir Bernard Pares lived in Tsarist Russia. After the setting up of the Soviet Government in November 1917 he worked in Russia for the British Government, which spent at that time about £100,000,000 on armed intervention in the hope of suppressing the Soviets. In 1919 Sir Bernard returned to England and set himself "to counter the propaganda for an application of the Bolshevist principles and programme in this country" by giving "public lectures in almost every county of England" (*Moscow Admits a Critic*, p. 10).

Only at the end of 1935 did Sir Bernard Pares again visit Russia, now the largest unit in a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. On his return home he wrote a little book on his impressions, and in it he asked: "To what extent was the Government a foreigner to the people?"

This is his answer:

"In the times of Tsardom I never failed to feel its almost complete isolation. The Ministers of those times, and more especially in the last days of Tsardom, were for the most part obviously haphazard choices from a very narrow and by no means distinguished

circle. I was, of course, one of those who longed to see the Russian public, as a whole, make its way into the precincts of government, and in 1917 for a short time I had that satisfaction. But even then there was the much less definable barrier, though a very real one, which separated the Russian intelligentsia from the great mass of the Russian public. . . . I have to say that in Moscow to-day this frontier seems to have disappeared altogether, and in my visits to public offices and great institutions Government and people were of the same stock" (ibid., p. 35).

The contention of the Webbs, then, that "the U.S.S.R. is a Government instrumented by all the adult inhabitants" is confirmed by the observations of Sir Bernard Pares. Both these authorities agree that the Government of the U.S.S.R. is a Government of the people. Both agree, then, that the Government of the U.S.S.R. contains features which we associate, not with dictatorship, but with democracy.

We are sometimes inclined, I think unwisely, to treat democracy and dictatorship as two mutually exclusive terms, when in actual fact they may often represent two aspects of the same system of government. For example, if we turn to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, to the article dealing with "Democracy," we read: "Democracy is that form of government in which the people rules itself, either directly, as in the small city-states of Greece, or through representatives."

But the same writer goes on to say this: "All the people in the city-state did not have the right to participate in government, but only those who were citizens, in the legal and original sense. Outside this charmed circle of the privileged were the slaves, who had no voice whatever in the making of the laws under

which they toiled. They had no political and hardly any civil rights; they were not 'people.' Thus the democracy of the Greek city-state was in the strict sense no democracy at all."

The Greek city-state has been cited time and again by historians as the birthplace of democracy. And yet, on reading the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, we find that in fact this was a democracy only for a "charmed circle of the privileged," while the slaves, who did the work of the community, "had no voice whatever in the making of the laws under which they toiled."

The classical example of democracy was, then, a democracy only for certain people. For others, for those who did the hard work of the community, it was a dictatorship. At the very birthplace of democracy itself we find that democracy and dictatorship went hand in hand as two aspects of the same political system. To refer to the "democracy" of the Greek city-state without saying for whom this democracy existed is misleading. To describe the democracy of the Greek city-state without pointing out that it could only exist as a result of the toil of the slaves who "had no political and hardly any civil rights" falsifies the real history of the origin of democracy.

Democracy, then, from its origin, has not precluded the simultaneous existence of dictatorship. The essential question which must be asked, when social systems appear to include elements both of democracy and dictatorship, is, "For whom is there democracy?" and "Over whom is there a dictatorship?"

Let us turn to the modern world. The Soviet Union, we have said, is often described as a dictatorship. Yet eminent authorities, describing the Soviet system of government, ascribe to it characteristics which we

generally associate with democracy. Can it be that here, too, there is democracy for one section of the community, but dictatorship over another?

The answer to this question is found in the first Soviet Constitution of 1918. In this Constitution the purpose of the Soviet State was described as being "the establishment (in the form of a strong Soviet Government) of the dictatorship of the urban and rural workers, combined with the poorer peasantry, to secure . . . the abolition of the exploitation of man by man, and the establishment of Socialism."

The urban and rural workers, together with the poorer peasantry, made up over 95 per cent of the population of Russia. So that this "dictatorship" was to be a government by the vast majority of the people —those who worked. In this way the Soviet State was the exact opposite of the Greek city-state, in which those who worked had no say in the government.

The Soviet State introduced universal suffrage for working citizens, without property or residential qualifications, and irrespective of sex, nationality, or religion. The right to vote and to stand for election was made available to all such citizens from the age of eighteen upwards. But those who employed labour for profit were deprived of electoral rights. The Soviet State in this way provided a degree of democracy for the working people such as they do not enjoy in any other country even at the present time; but over the employers this democratic power exercised a dictatorship. The small circle of the employers of labour had no voice whatever in the making of the laws to which they were subject.

From its origin the Soviet State consciously embodied features of democracy and features of dictatorship. But the democracy was enjoyed by the vast majority of the

population, and the dictatorship was over a small minority. At present I do not wish to go into the whys and wherefores of this, or into its rights and wrongs, but I just want to make one point absolutely clear: it is that democracy and dictatorship have never necessarily been mutually exclusive terms. To speak of "democracy" without saying for whom may be misleading. And to refer to dictatorship without specifying who dictates to whom is also liable to cause misunderstanding.

The Soviet State, set up in October 1917, professed to give full democratic rights to the vast majority of the people. Did it do this? In Part I of this book I shall give my answer to this question by describing the organisation of Soviet life as I have lived it, from 1931 to 1936. Soviet life, to one who has been brought up in a country where the factories and the land, the mines and the shops, are private property, is a new life, a life which differs in a vast number of ways from that of other countries. And, having lived this life, I find I can only agree with the Webbs and with Sir Bernard Pares, and refer to it as essentially democratic.

But if this life is so different, what is it that makes it differ? In what way is the Soviet State organised so that it can give, to visitors from democratic Britain, this impression of unity between Government and people, of real democracy? In Part II we shall see how the Soviet State came into existence, we shall analyse its structure, and note how it has developed together with changes in social relationships within the country. The new life described in Part I is the essential product of the new State described in Part II.

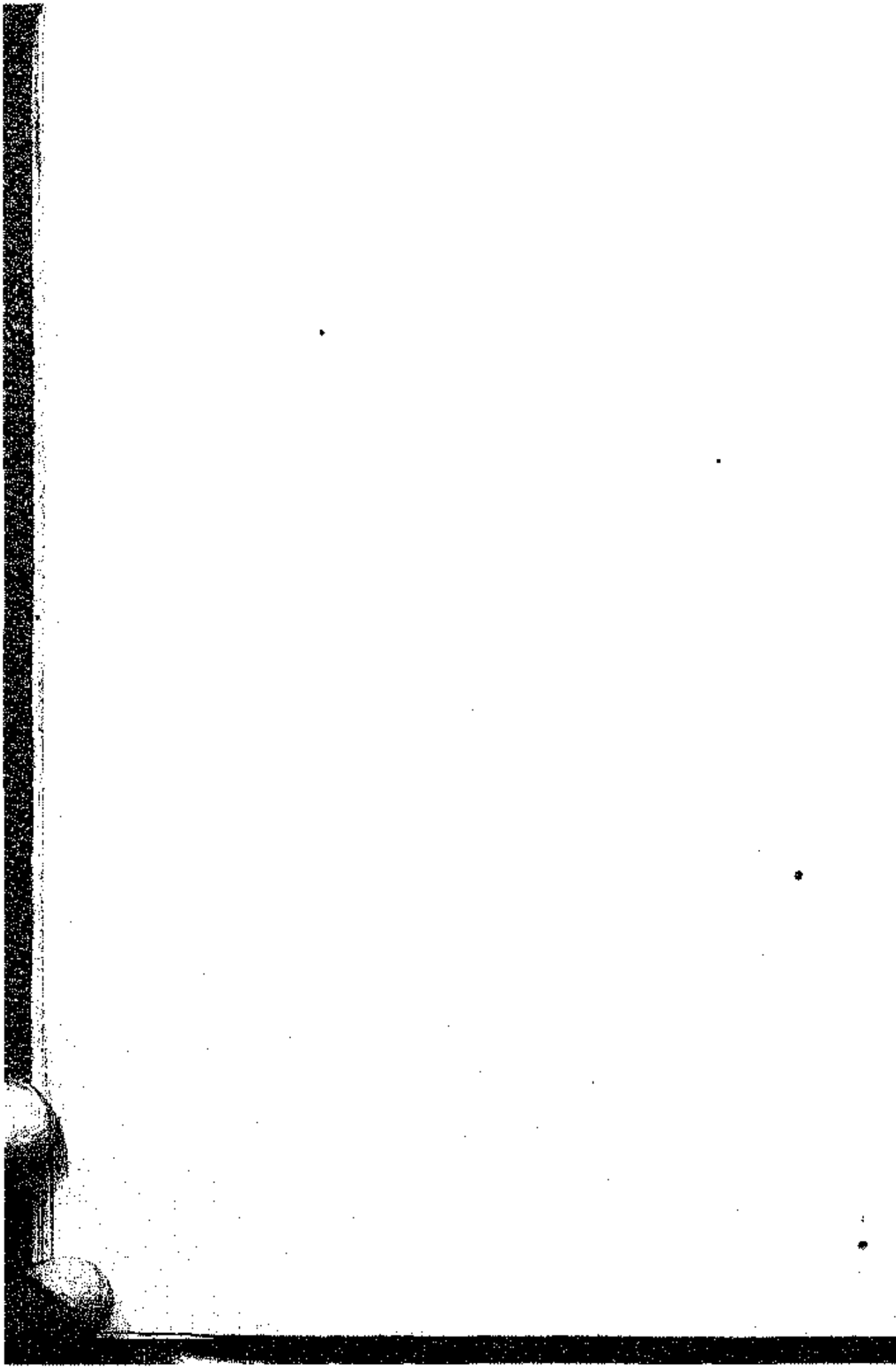
But if the Soviet State has provided democracy for the whole people, and democracy of a kind which even

impresses those who come from democratic Britain, there may be something deficient, perhaps, in our own conceptions of democracy. For to us in Britain to-day it is hard to reconcile the idea of democracy with a dictatorship against any class, however small such a class may be. But perhaps our attitude to democracy is a little old-fashioned ! Perhaps we overestimate the extent to which democracy exists in Britain to-day. Let us see in Part III !

But, first of all, let us visit the Soviet Union as it exists to-day and see the new life that they are building. Then let us examine the framework within which this new life is developing, a framework which itself has to be altered as life demands. Then, when we know the Soviet Union, let us come back to our own country, to make comparisons, and to draw conclusions !

PART I

A NEW LIFE



CHAPTER I

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

A FOREIGNER who takes up work in the U.S.S.R. is struck by many things. But, for an all-round view of what everyday life is like, few occupations could be better than that of a teacher. The foreign worker in the Soviet factory has the experience of being a wage-earner in a Soviet enterprise. But the worker in a Soviet school not only has this important experience, but also constant contact with the younger generation, with those who form the youngest and freshest ranks of Soviet citizens. For this reason I am glad that my first occupation in the U.S.S.R. was that of a teacher in a technical college, where I was able to see the working of a really democratic educational system at first hand.

There are two features of Soviet education which must strike every person who has taught outside the U.S.S.R. The first is that the students themselves appear to be drawn from people of every walk of life, who are always enabled to study if they have the necessary ability, without any economic burden through not earning a living while studying. The second feature is the extent to which the Soviet student, in school, technical college, and university, is trained to participate in the running of public affairs, starting in the school or university itself, and extending over every aspect of Soviet life. In the present chapter we shall

deal with the first of these features of Soviet education. In the next chapter we shall consider the second.

A first decree of the Russian Soviet Government, adopted shortly after the seizure of power in 1917, dealt with education: "Every genuinely democratic power must, in the domain of education, in a country where ignorance and illiteracy reign supreme, make its first aim the struggle against this darkness . . . it must introduce universal, obligatory, and free tuition for all." And, in the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. adopted in December 1936, we find the Right to Education being guaranteed to every citizen by "universal compulsory elementary education, free of charge, including higher education, by a system of State stipends for the overwhelming majority of students in higher schools, instruction in schools in the native language, and organisation of free vocational, technical, and agronomic education for the toilers of the factories, State farms, machine and tractor stations, and collective farms."

The significance of these two declarations of Soviet educational policy can only be appreciated when certain basic facts are known. In pre-revolutionary Russia well over 80 per cent of the adult population could not read or write. To-day the percentage of adult illiterates has been reduced to less than 10 per cent. In the years before the Revolution the number of children attending school was round about 8 million, of whom only half a million received any secondary education. By 1934 the number of children attending school had reached 25 million—more than half the population of Great Britain, and over three times the pre-revolutionary figure. By the end of 1937 the number of children attending school is planned to reach 30 million.

This rapid extension of education has not taken place without the greatest difficulties. I remember how, between 1931 and 1934, there was the most acute shortage of accommodation for all educational institutions. In the towns the school-leaving age was being rapidly raised to seventeen and eighteen. But there were not enough schools: so the school buildings were used by two shifts of children, the younger ones in the first half of the day, the older ones in the later half. And as far as the higher educational institutions were concerned, I have taught university classes in the offices of State departments from six o'clock in the evening onwards because there was no accommodation available earlier in the day.

But that difficulty was temporary. In 1935 Moscow built over 70 new schools, and another 120 in 1936. The shift system has now been abolished. Similar programmes of school-building in other centres have put an end to the shift system there also. And to-day in the Soviet towns every child has a schooling from the age of seven to the age of seventeen or eighteen, while an increasing number are attending kindergartens before they go to school, and attending the university or other higher educational institutions when they finish.

The Soviet educational system is not yet complete. At present every town child has compulsory education from the age of seven to the age of seventeen. This is an achievement of the past few years. In the villages the school-leaving age is still round about fourteen, but certain villages have already advanced ahead of this. In Yasnaya Polyana, the one-time home of Tolstoi, a school has been established in his memory which provides secondary education for the children up to the age of seventeen. In Chapaevka, in the Ukraine,

the collective farm has provided the necessary funds for the raising of the school-leaving age to seventeen. In the latter case all the children of the village continue their schooling to seventeen, and some children from neighbouring villages also obtain a secondary education there. I mention these two villages because I happen to have visited them. There is a continually growing number of such village secondary schools.

From a Soviet secondary school any pupil who has achieved the necessary standard can enter a university. And, as a university student, he or she receives a maintenance allowance from the State while studying. The Soviet student is paid, and higher education is open to all without being a financial burden. All students who finish a Soviet secondary education have the opportunity, according to their abilities, to proceed to a higher educational institution.

But all children in the U.S.S.R. do not yet enjoy a compulsory secondary education. If they finish a village school at fourteen, they may then go to some industrial training school in the town, or start to work in the collective farms. Also, in industry itself, there are many workers, many of them still in their twenties, who have never had a schooling after the age of fourteen. The school-leaving age has been raised very rapidly in the past few years, and certain children have finished school at fourteen only to find that if they had been born two years later they would have had the opportunity to continue until the age of seventeen. Have they missed their chance?

In no country of the world are so many facilities available for those who have, for some reason or other, missed the opportunity for a secondary school education. Some time before I left Moscow I remember

reading that, in certain villages where the school-leaving age was being raised, those who had left school at fourteen, three or four years before, were wanting to continue their education and to obtain the secondary education which had just been introduced. So the schools readmitted these students, who were now able to benefit from the raising of the school-leaving age, though they had left school several years previously. In these particular villages certain individuals who had left school at fourteen returned at the age of seventeen and eighteen for another three or four years' study !

But that is not all. For the system of adult education in the U.S.S.R. is to-day so widespread that it is possible for almost every working citizen to qualify, by means of free evening classes, for entry to the university. In the cases of older workers, who finished school at fourteen and then had a purely industrial training, it is possible to obtain a secondary education free of charge at evening classes at their place of work, and then to become full-time university students, drawing the usual State allowance while studying.

I found that many of the students of English whom I was teaching in Moscow in 1932 had been recruited in this way. Young peasants from the villages, and young workers from the factories, who had left school at fourteen, had then continued to study in evening classes, had qualified for entrance to technical schools and universities, and were now full-time students, training to become teachers.

I say that it is possible for " almost " every working citizen to qualify for a higher education in the U.S.S.R. to-day. The word " almost " is used because there still are, in certain exceptional cases, technical difficulties

which may prevent certain individuals from obtaining the kind of training that they would like. I have in mind one particular example. This was a young dining-car attendant on the Trans-Siberian Railway. He was particularly interested in the theatre, and wanted to become an actor. But since his work was on a dining-car, and he was travelling for ten days at a time, and then having several days off, he was not in a position to attend regular evening classes. He had left school at fourteen, and therefore could not, without such classes, qualify for entrance to one of the dramatic institutes or universities. Actually, he considered himself to be an unfortunate exception to the general Soviet rule that every working person can enter the university.

So far we have been considering equality of opportunity in the purely educational sphere. But equality of opportunity in the U.S.S.R. extends far beyond the realms of education.

Perhaps another of the most interesting features of Soviet life to a foreign visitor is the close link which exists between all kinds of amateur and professional activities. This starts in the school, in the form of an intimate connection between the children's studies and their hobbies. The Soviet schoolchild has the opportunity, in the school buildings, or in other institutions specially created for the purpose, of being a young naturalist or photographer, scientist, engineer, or inventor, in his or her spare time. Equipment is supplied free of charge, and instructors are available. Many Soviet children to-day go on to the university to specialise in that very subject which they found to be their most interesting hobby when at school.

In the Soviet factories and collective farms much of the leisure time of the people—and this leisure time is

ample since the working day averages less than seven hours throughout Soviet industry—is spent on amateur activities such as dramatics, literature, sport, photography, art, and so on. But these amateur activities are not, as is usual in other countries, left to the care of the local enthusiasts, without professional assistance. For, in all Soviet amateur activities, the professional people in that particular sphere render organised assistance, so that the general level of the amateurs is raised so as rapidly to approach a professional standard.

A typical example of this is theatrical work. Practically every industrial enterprise in the U.S.S.R. has its workers' dramatics circle. Agreements are made through the trade unions with professional theatres, and these promise to give assistance to such circles in the form of voluntary or paid help by trained actors and producers. The result is that the amateur group has the benefit of professional assistance, and can raise its standard of excellence considerably above that which in this country we term "amateur," meaning inferior to "professional."

Such an "amateur" dramatics group in the U.S.S.R. may at any time, having reached a certain standard, be offered by the authorities the opportunity of taking over a professional theatre as a full-time job. I have been present at a competition of village theatres in Moscow and seen a performance by a young theatrical group which was certainly up to the best British repertory standard. The whole company consisted of young working men and women who had previously been members of the dramatics club of the automobile plant in Gorky. They had received professional guidance from the Vachtangov Theatre in Moscow, and, at a certain stage, had been offered

facilities by the Commissariat of Education to become a full-time theatrical company. They now had their own theatre in a Russian village. In this way workers in the factory had become professional actors and actresses, through their amateur theatricals.

Just as in the sphere of the theatre there is an opportunity for the ordinary amateur to become a professional, so, too, in painting and writing, in sport and in science.

A reference to sport in this connection may raise a query in the minds of certain readers. Does this mean that there is professionalism in Soviet sport? The answer is that in the U.S.S.R. to-day the facilities for sport are rapidly growing all over the country. New sports grounds are being laid out, and factories and collective farms, towns, and villages, have their teams, which compete against each other in separate matches and league competitions. But these teams require trainers. And the trainers are the " professionals " in the Soviet Union.

Any Soviet worker can participate in sport free of charge. Those who are good enough to play in their town or factory teams have their expenses paid when away from home, and draw the equivalent of their wages from the sports club when away for matches or training. Those who are outstanding at any sport become eligible for the whole-time work of instructor to other teams. In this way the road is open for the amateur sportsman to become a full-time professional instructor.

We have so far considered two aspects of equality of opportunity in the U.S.S.R.: first, the equal availability of education to all citizens; secondly, the possibility of development through amateur activities to professional activities, quite apart from the ordinary educational system of the country. Certain other aspects of equality of opportunity remain to be considered.

It is not every worker in the Soviet factory or collective farm who wants either to go to a university, or to convert some amateur activity into a full-time profession. There are hundreds of thousands of workers greatly interested in the particular jobs which they are at present doing, but who want advancement to more skilled or more responsible branches of the same work. Such advancement is possible in all Soviet enterprises.

A characteristic of every Soviet institution is the stress which is laid on the desirability for every working man and woman to raise their qualifications at their work. Whether it is a case of teachers in an elementary school or university, or workers at machines in a factory, or typists in an office, there are always available the means of further education, through evening classes free of charge. And in all this a leading part is played by the best workers in the enterprise, who often undertake voluntarily to train other workers up to their own level.

When, in 1935, the coal-miner Stakhanov became famous all over the world as the young man who in a six-hour shift had doubled output and had at the same time received a tremendous rise in earnings as a result, many people outside the U.S.S.R. asked the question: "Does this not mean that a new privileged category of workers will arise, having a monopoly of the jobs which earn high wages?" To those who were living in the U.S.S.R. at the time, this question appeared singularly divorced from real life, for in his spare time this same coal-miner Stakhanov was going round his own and other pits training the workers there to use his methods and to become more efficient organisers of their work, raising earnings accordingly. In this way leading workers in the U.S.S.R. train others up to their own level.

From the point of view of the ordinary worker this means that, in every sphere of work, the most highly skilled are willing helpers and trainers. Every working man and woman has the opportunity to learn to improve technique at the job, with the expert assistance of those who are best at that kind of work. Obviously, such a system is itself dependent on certain economic conditions. Leading workers in the U.S.S.R. would not be so willing to train others up to their own level of efficiency if, as in Britain to-day, they thought they might be replaced by these other workers as soon as they had trained them. Full co-operation on the part of all the skilled workers in a community in training others to their own level of skill can only be obtained in a society in which there is no unemployment, and where every sort of skilled work is in demand. In the U.S.S.R. there has been no unemployment since 1931, and there is a demand for every kind of qualified worker. It is in such circumstances that the skilled worker knows that by training others he is not endangering his own security, and that the community as a whole, and he as a member of it, will gain from a greater supply of skilled workers and the products of their labour.

There still remains one sphere of equality of opportunity in the U.S.S.R. which has not yet been discussed. This is public administration.

In the first Soviet Constitution of 1918 the vast majority of the population obtained electoral rights on a wider scale than have existed at any previous time in Russia or, with the exception of Soviet China, in any other country to this day. But it would be a great mistake to think that, under Soviet conditions, participation in public administration depended simply on the electoral rights of the population. It must be realised

that in the U.S.S.R. to-day there no longer exists that distinction between "civil service" and other occupations which is typical of every other country. The reason for this is that since all industry and trade are in the hands of the State, the relation of the manager of a factory to a factory worker is no different in essentials from that of a director of a State clinic to a doctor working there, or of a headmaster of a State school to one of the teachers. All Soviet citizens are, in a sense, civil servants. And it follows from this that the opportunity to rise in any particular occupation to the most skilled and most responsible posts means, in effect, the possibility to rise to the highest posts in the public administration of the country.

There is a further feature of Soviet administration which must here be mentioned. While we have considered the case of the amateur actor, we have not yet mentioned the "amateur" administrator, the voluntary worker in various municipal and State departments, who is an essential part of the Soviet apparatus of State. Not only is it customary in Soviet elections to return members to the Soviets, or Councils, in whose hands lies the authority to govern the country; but, in addition to this, it is the usual thing for the electors to nominate further additional representatives to work for the Soviets, in their various departments, voluntarily in their spare time. In this way voluntary public workers play a considerable part in the Soviet health, housing, educational, and other services; as also in the work of the militia.

In this sphere, as in the sphere of amateur activities in the factories, such voluntary work is a recruiting-ground for able administrators. The factory workers, men and women, who in their spare time do good work for the Soviet in one of its departments, may at any

time be called upon to turn such work into a permanent job, and to transfer from their factory to some administrative position in the Soviet for which they have shown their aptitude as voluntary workers.

Equality of opportunity in the U.S.S.R., then, may be said to exist in education, and in the opportunities available both to youth and to adults for obtaining education. It may be said to exist in every profession, through the availability of the necessary training facilities for all citizens to improve their skill. In the sphere of administration there are paths to the leading administrative positions, through election, through promotion, and by way of voluntary work in the various administrative bodies of the State. And, in cases where working people show ability at some amateur activity, there is the opportunity to turn their amateur activity into a profession.

Such a system not only gives every citizen an opportunity to qualify for every occupation, but the " square pegs in the round holes " can re-qualify for some other occupation if an earlier choice has proved unsuitable.

This system, the result of nineteen years' development, is still far from complete. There are still a few dining-car attendants who would like to become actors but who, because of the mobile location of their present jobs, cannot immediately qualify for the other occupation. But already the inequalities of opportunity are the exceptions, whereas elsewhere they are still the rule.

In conclusion, a word must be said on two kinds of equality which have existed since the Soviet State was set up, and which further contribute to make equality of opportunity effective for all citizens.

First, it must be realised that in the U.S.S.R. to-day every citizen enjoys the rights of citizenship irrespective

of nationality. In 1918, in the first Soviet Constitution, it was declared " contrary to the fundamental laws of the Republic to institute or tolerate privileges, or any prerogative whatever, founded on such grounds, or to repress national minorities, or in any way to limit their rights." And, in the new Constitution of 1936, the same point is stated with even more emphasis: " The equality of the rights of citizens of the U.S.S.R., irrespective of their nationality or race, in all fields of economic, State, cultural, social, and political life, is an irrevocable law.

" Any direct or indirect restriction of these rights, or conversely, the establishment of direct or indirect privileges for citizens on account of the race or nationality to which they belong, as well as any propagation of racial or national exceptionalism or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law."

Citizens of every nationality are treated as equals. A Tartar may live and work in his own republic, or he may choose to live and work in one or other of the national republics of the Union, but wherever he goes he will have the same treatment as everyone else. Further, as far as education is concerned, every citizen has the right to education in his own language, provided only that there are sufficient fellow-nationals in the locality to make such education practicable in an organised way. In the U.S.S.R. no student is forced, as students are compelled, for example, in Wales to-day, to sit for examinations in their own national universities in a language which is strange to them. The advantage of this may not easily be appreciated by Englishmen, but I have known plenty of students in North Wales, many of whom found the English language extremely difficult, who will appreciate what this means to the students of all the nations of the Soviet Union.

The effect of the Soviet attitude to nationality has been a vast increase in national pride throughout Soviet territory at the same time as national antagonism has been eliminated. Particularly does this show itself among the Jewish population, who were as ruthlessly persecuted under Tsarism as they are in Nazi Germany to-day. In Tsarist Russia they did not have their own territory. To-day, to give them complete equality with other nationalities, the Soviet Government has put Birobidjan at their disposal, and Jews, like citizens of all other nationalities of the Union, may settle in their own national territory or elsewhere, according to choice.

In his *Russian Sketchbook*, David Low has a cartoon which is supposed to illustrate the Soviet solution of the Jewish problem. A foreigner, obviously Mr. Low himself, is interviewing a group of men with very large noses. Their nationality cannot be doubted. The Foreign Enquirer asks: "How do the Jews get on?" and a Comrade replies: "Well, you see, there aren't Jews here any more. Jews is just Russians like ourthelvth."

I quote this because as a rule Low showed very great insight into Soviet life. But this cartoon is an exception, for in this portrayal of the Soviet solution of the Jewish problem Low shows precisely the reverse of the truth. Contrary to Low's conception, the U.S.S.R. is the one country in the world to-day where no Jew will be found who will not proudly state that he is a Jew. The Soviet Jew is a Jew and is proud of it, just as the Soviet Russian is Russian and proud of it. It is not the Soviet Jew, but the German and the Hungarian, the American and the English, the Jew of every other country of the world outside the U.S.S.R. who, at some time or another, feels it is in his interest to pretend he

is just a German or Hungarian, American or Englishman, like everybody else. It is only in the U.S.S.R. that this feeling no longer exists. Low portrays the elimination of the Jewish problem as the negation of nationality, whereas in fact it lies in the full expression of national consciousness and the most extensive development of national pride.

Finally, equality of opportunity between the sexes in the U.S.S.R. must be mentioned. You do not hear in the U.S.S.R. references to "women's jobs" as opposed to the jobs of men. Admission to all occupations is based on merit, irrespective of sex, and payment in all occupations is also based on merit, irrespective of sex. And, in so far as the rôle of women in society is complicated by their functions as mothers, this side of their lives is being increasingly cared for by the rapid development of social insurance and communal services.

Equality of opportunity in the U.S.S.R., then, exists irrespective of the nationality or the sex of citizens. It exists in education, in every occupation, and in opportunities to change from one occupation to another. To say that exceptions do not occur would be fantastic, but the really significant feature of equality of opportunity in the U.S.S.R. to-day is that these words no longer express something to be vaguely attained at some future date, but a fact of Soviet life at the present time. In the U.S.S.R. every case of absence of equality of opportunity is now regarded as an exception, and as a serious fault in the working of the system. As faults, the people combat the existence of such exceptions.

And so we come to another aspect of Soviet democracy, the combating of faults in the system. How is this done? We begin to answer this question in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER II

EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY to receive an education in the U.S.S.R. really exists to-day. This is important. But so is the kind of education that there is equality of opportunity to receive. While, in such a book as this, it is not appropriate to make a detailed study of the whole of the Soviet educational system, it is extremely important to examine it further, in so far as it provides the youth of the country not only with qualifications as future workers, but with the ability to fulfil the tasks of citizenship, to participate in running those concerns in which they are employed, to combat faults in the social organisation of the community, and, in fact, to govern the country in which they live.

The young Soviet citizen, finishing his education, becomes a wage-earner in a State enterprise, or a member of a co-operative organisation. For, at the present time, there are no longer private concerns which employ the labour of others. The young Soviet citizen, in either of these forms of organisation, will be called upon to participate in running them. But he will participate in running these organisations in co-operation with others. He must, therefore, learn to accept responsibility—but responsibility to a group, to a collective.

If citizens are to participate effectively in running

the country in which they dwell, they must have an appropriate education. Therefore, even in the elementary school in the Soviet Union the visitor is struck by the extent to which the student is treated as a citizen. Corporal punishment is forbidden by law in the Soviet schools, and other punishment in any form is practically non-existent. The children are taught to look upon the teachers, not as vested with an almost supernatural authority, but as human beings like themselves, who have more experience. The headmaster or headmistress of a Soviet school is a senior comrade, who holds a position of such authority only by virtue of ability and good leadership.

Everything possible is done in the Soviet schools to bring the children into contact with the everyday life of the country. Their lessons include knowledge of current political questions and of industry and agriculture. In their spare time, facilities are provided in the schools and other institutions for hobbies such as natural history or engineering, literature or sport. The important fact in this connection is that the Soviet child is encouraged to take his hobbies seriously, and is given the possibility of doing useful work which may have positive value. Thus, groups of "Young Inventors" attached to Soviet schools, turn out some hundreds of inventions annually. And in the Moscow Zoo a group of child helpers participates in the research work that is being carried on there.

And once, on May 2nd, a public holiday, the direction of traffic in the city of Kiev was in the hands of the children of the city. And the children in all the larger towns have their own theatres and cinemas, run by the Commissariat of Education in conjunction with the local school authorities.

At the children's theatres the children are expected not only to be spectators but to criticise the performances and to make suggestions for their improvement. The Moscow children's theatres arrange meetings between children and writers, at which writers read their latest children's stories, and discuss their merits with the children prior to publication. The children learn to play a part in determining the kind of books that are going to be published for them.

These examples, taken at random from the life of Soviet children to-day, serve to emphasise the fact that the Soviet child is a citizen from his earliest days, receiving the respect of other citizens, and with the opportunity to utilise his or her spare time in some useful hobby which may be of actual scientific or artistic value.

But how is the life of the school itself organised?

To many teachers and parents in other countries it seems inconceivable that schools should be run throughout a vast country without the use of punishment and all the other devices for preserving the authority of the teacher to which we are accustomed in the rest of the world. But Soviet experience has proved conclusively, in a period of twenty years' trial, that if children are treated as fellow citizens, and not as a kind of inferior being, they will behave as citizens. If an appeal is made to them as serious human beings, then they will answer by showing a sense of responsibility which can never be inculcated by the cane or by other forcible displays of the teacher's authority and power.

If I were to draw a comparison between the typical Soviet school and the school in Britain, I would say from my own experience that the atmosphere of the

Soviet classroom can only be compared with that of the British playing-field. All that voluntary discipline which is obtained in England, even among quite young children, in the sphere of games is obtained, in the U.S.S.R., in the actual work of learning. And when we ask how this comes about, I think we are bound to realise that in the British school, in general, it is only in the sports activities that the children are treated as citizens voluntarily carrying on certain social activities for their mutual benefit, whereas, in contrast to this, the ordinary school work is treated as a necessary evil enforced upon them by some higher authority.

In the Soviet school the greatest incentive is given to individual achievement, but only in such a way as is consistent with the developing of a team spirit. The marking of Soviet students does not consist of arranging them in order from first to last, but in classifying them into groups, marked "excellent," "good," "medium," and "weak." It is theoretically possible in any class for 100 per cent of the students to obtain the mark of "excellent." The good student is not prevented from obtaining the mark of "excellent" if someone else also does well, whereas, under the more antiquated system so common still in Britain, only one child can be first in the class, only one can be second, and so on. To the English child, marked in this way, it is of advantage not to help the others to do well; but the Soviet child gains no advantage whatever from other children in the class being marked "medium" or "weak." In the U.S.S.R. there is not the individualistic system in which the success of one is obtained by displacing another from a leading position.

In addition to this, in the Soviet school collective

competitions are regularly arranged between the different groups of students, for the best possible results in each class. While all the pupils in one class try to attain the individual achievement of "excellent," the whole class competes with the other classes in the school for the maximum number of "excellents" and "goods" and for a minimum of "weaks." This "Socialist Competition," as it is called, enthuses the Soviet class of children with something of the zeal for their studies as the English football team has for its game. And the result is that the best students voluntarily assist the weaker ones, in order that the best results may be obtained by the class as a whole.

It is these two features of the Soviet school system—the treating of all pupils as citizens, and giving them the opportunity to do useful work if they wish to do it—together with the organisation of their work so as to introduce into it some of the fun that in Britain is associated purely with leisure, with activities rigidly separated from work, that lay the foundation for quite a different system of discipline in Soviet schools from that which exists in Britain.

The Soviet child, as a responsible citizen, and keen on the success of his or her work because it also means the success of the team in competition with other teams, is interested in having good results as an individual, and for the whole group. As a result, the desire to work has not to be enforced by punishment from above, any more than punishment proves necessary to make the boys of an English school take their football seriously.

In the English school, even where the use of the cane is common, it is not usually found necessary to employ it in order to stimulate concentration on such matters as football. The collective enthusiasm of the children

themselves proves to be an adequate stimulus to each individual to exert the necessary energy. The slacker is reformed by the collective pressure of the other players, and the good player, in the interests of the team, coaches the weaker.

It is precisely this spirit which prevails in the Soviet school, not only within the limited sphere of sport, but throughout. And it is in such conditions that the relations of teacher to pupil are those of experienced adviser to willing learner, and that discipline is enforced almost entirely by the students themselves.

The Soviet classroom is a scene of collective team activity. The students elect their own leader, who is responsible for checking such matters as attendance and general discipline. A students' committee decides matters of general importance to the class, and for the school as a whole there is an elected committee which is the recognised representative body of the students. Under the leadership of this body groups of students, in their spare time, undertake various kinds of work in connection with the administration of the school. It is a common thing, in a Soviet school, to find a children's sanitary commission that brings recommendations to the administration and to the other pupils concerning questions of cleanliness, and a kitchen committee that passes regular comment on the food supplied in the school dining-room. It is also common for the merits of teachers to be openly discussed at meetings, at which not only teachers have the right to criticise students, but students have the right to criticise the work of their teachers.

The Soviet teacher is also a member of the team—holding the office of "coach." Here, too, the only apt comparison is with the sports activities in an English

school. Whereas, on the one hand, we would find much scepticism in this country as to the advisability of pupils choosing their teachers, on the ground that they would choose those that gave them the least work, it would hardly be maintained that the boys in a school would not be capable of passing judgment on the question of which master was the best football coach. In the latter case it would probably be generally agreed that the boys concerned would be good judges; whereas, in the former, it would be suggested that their judgment was quite unreliable. The only reason for this distinction, of course, lies in the justifiable assumption that, in general, in the English school, the children are not so interested in their academic learning as they are in their football. But in the U.S.S.R., with the status of children as described, and the competitive system in academic work having been developed along lines comparable only with sport activities in Britain, the spirit of the British playing-fields has been brought into the Soviet schools. If the playing-fields of Eton have been responsible for bringing up a race of Empire rulers, then the classrooms of the Soviet Union, by introducing that same spirit of collective sport into the work of the whole younger generation, is bringing up a race of people really capable of ruling, not an Empire, but themselves.

The Socialist competition between the classes of a Soviet school has been mentioned. It is important to note that, in this Socialist competition, the teachers are also participants. The children of the different classes compete against each other for the highest number of "excellents," and the teachers of these classes compete against each other also for achieving the greatest number of "excellents" in the classes under their

charge. In this way the children and teachers have the same common aim as is shared between the football team and its coach in an English school.

In order to check the results of this Socialist competition, regular meetings take place between teachers and pupils, together and separately, to discuss how the work is progressing. In such discussions the teachers' methods may be discussed and criticised by the children. Further, in the Press, edited by the staff and children in Soviet schools, there is a vehicle for the written word. No Soviet schoolroom is complete without its wall-newspaper, a glorified notice-board, on which are pasted articles on school activities, and on matters of general local and national importance. Such newspapers are edited by the students and by the teachers, and contain full discussion of all problems facing the school.

A group of children, for example, may visit another school where the dining facilities are superior to their own. They return, and the wall-newspaper contains an article demanding that the school administration at once take steps to make the dining facilities as good as in the other school. Or members of the sanitary commission may find that the washing facilities in another school are better, and so, in meetings and in the wall-newspaper, the demand is put forward that the administration take the necessary steps in their own school to improve conditions accordingly.

It is these children, and these students, trained to participate in the running of their schools and universities, who later go on to work in Soviet institutions of every kind. Clearly, such people would be intolerable employees for any ordinary employer of labour! Children who, at school, have had their own

representative committees which demanded that the administration improve the sanitary or feeding conditions, or supply better teachers, are not going to be docile wage-earners. They will tend to be disturbing elements, trade unionists always agitating for better conditions. Similarly, university students who, from the age of eighteen onwards become members of trade unions, and whose trade union committee puts forward all kinds of demands on the part of the students, are not, when their university training is over, going to be docile employees.

The type of person created by the Soviet educational system, then, is an intolerable type from the standpoint of any private employer. Such people, to use a common term, "would simply make a revolution." And that is why, only in the U.S.S.R., and after the Revolution, an educational system has been developed which creates such people. For, in the U.S.S.R., the new system of production, where the power of the private employer has been first restricted, and then finally eliminated altogether, requires a type of citizen altogether different from the wage-earner of capitalist society.

This new type of citizen can only be understood when we know how he lives, and the conditions under which he works. Therefore, from the Soviet educational institutions let us now go with our young citizen to his first job, whether in a State institution or in a co-operative organisation. We shall then see that the education of the Soviet school is a preparation for responsible citizenship in Soviet society.

CHAPTER III

THE RIGHTS OF THE WAGE-EARNER

SOME TIME AGO, when a certain well-known American business man was visiting the Soviet Union, he happened to boast to his guide that he employed several thousands of men in his various enterprises. The guide, not accustomed to such a situation, was unable to hide her dismay. "People get ten years for that in this country," she said!

It is possible to-day to travel from Moscow to Vladivostock or from Archangel to Tiflis, and nowhere to find a landlord, an owner of a factory, or an employer of labour. People abound everywhere, but ask them how they gain a living and you will find that, without exception, they either work in some publicly owned institution, such as a factory or a coal-mine, a school or a clinic, or they are working members of a co-operative organisation. About a tenth of the people of the U.S.S.R. do not fall into these two categories; these are individual peasants and individual handicraftsmen, who work for themselves, but do not employ the labour of others.

When we look at Soviet industry, education, entertainment, or scientific institutions, we find that they are to-day completely owned and controlled by public bodies, whether the Government of the U.S.S.R., one

of the national republics, or a local authority. And, as a result of this, we find that practically every adult citizen in a Soviet town to-day is a wage-earner, or someone who, by domestic work, enables others to work for a wage.

Now in Tsarist Russia, as in Britain to-day, practically the whole of industry and agriculture was in private hands. In the towns of those days you would meet rich employers, owning the factories and the coal-mines and living on the profits of these enterprises. You would meet rich foreigners with capital invested in Russian industry, who drew each year a share of the profits; and, on the other hand, you would meet large numbers of people, the vast majority of the town dwellers, who worked for a living in all these enterprises which were owned by somebody else.

To-day in the Soviet Union the employers are extinct. Citizens are wage-earners or co-operators, and a large section of them are wage-earners. Every Soviet citizen, according to the Constitution of the U.S.S.R., enjoys the right to work, to leisure, and to security. The abolition of unemployment guarantees that all may work. Leisure is guaranteed by a working day which averages less than seven hours and by paid holidays for all workers. Security is safeguarded by social insurance against illness, by which wages are drawn during ill health; and by non-contributory pensions for the aged at sixty for men, fifty-five for women, and at still lower ages in occupations considered particularly arduous or harmful to health. But, in addition to these rights, which workers in other countries may well envy their Soviet comrades, the Soviet worker has the right to participate in running the concern in which he works, for he, as a citizen of the Soviet State, is a partner in the ownership of this concern.

The Soviet State was set up in October 1917. One of its first decrees dealt with "Workers' Control" in industry, and laid down that in every enterprise elected committees of the employees were to be set up, to express the will of the workers in that enterprise, and to supervise the running of it in the interests of the workers. At the same time such elected committees were to share responsibility with the employer "for the strictest order, discipline, and preservation of property."

In January 1918, four months later, it was decided, rather than perpetuate a system varying from factory to factory, each with its own methods of electing the workers' committee, that the work of controlling the management was to be henceforth in the hands of the elected committee of the trade union. In this way the Soviet Government gave a very great stimulus to trade union membership, for only by joining the trade union could the workers now play a part in electing the factory committee which was to represent them and control the management of the plant in their own interests.

The young Soviet State, however, not only enforced the representation of the workers on the management of privately owned factories; it also proceeded to take over the management of many of the large concerns, and also of those concerns which the employers refused any longer to operate. As this happened, a new problem arose: what was to be the relationship between the workers in these State enterprises and the management?

This question was discussed in 1921 at a special conference. It has decided that in all socialised enterprises the trade unions were to safeguard the interests of the workers against what were termed "bureaucratic perversions" on the part of the management,

while at the same time, as in the earlier decree, the unions were still responsible—together with the administration, which now represented the State—for the preservation of labour discipline and the protection of property. In this way the trade union committee became the officially recognised representative body of the workers in a Soviet factory, and, as such, had the right to participate with the management in all discussions of policy affecting the lives of the workers.

A foreigner, starting to work for the first time in the U.S.S.R., is at once struck by the relations between the managerial staff and the rank-and-file workers. The most significant fact that faces him is that the manager of a Soviet factory, as part of his duties, is under the obligation to improve the general living conditions of the workers, to increase the social amenities attached to the factory, to provide satisfactory service in the restaurant and medical centre, and to see that good care is given to the workers' children in nursery and kindergarten. The Soviet factory manager is responsible to the State, not only for raising the output of the factory in his charge, and for lowering its costs of production, but for raising the welfare of the workers in his factory, and devoting a considerable amount of time and energy to this work.

I well remember how, a year or two ago, there took place in Moscow a conference of "industrial leaders"—managers of Soviet factories. One of the subjects of discussion was the question of housing. And in this conference of factory managers it was emphatically stated that it was the duty of every factory manager to take steps to put an end to the existence of bed-bugs in the dwellings of the workers in the factory under his

care. Every factory manager was responsible for seeing that the workers had decent living-quarters.

Some readers, possibly, may think that such an example is ill chosen, only serving to show the backwardness of Soviet housing. I would draw the attention of such readers to a report which appeared in *The Times* of June 24th, 1936, in which the following statement is made: "It is estimated that 4,000,000 people suffer from the bed-bug in London alone"; but the fact is little known owing to "the public's reticence in the matter, and their refusal to admit that bugs were in their homes even when they knew of their presence." So it is not the existence of bed-bugs in the workers' dwellings that distinguishes the U.S.S.R. from Britain, or Moscow from London; it is the fact that the Soviet factory manager is under a definite obligation to help to exterminate the pest, thus improving the living conditions of the workers under his leadership—a duty not shared by the factory managers of Great Britain, whose responsibility is only to the owners of the factories and not to the workers.

This is one example of the responsibility of the Soviet factory administration for the welfare of its workers. Here is another. In the autumn of 1932 I travelled in the Caucasus with a group of workers on holiday. In the group there were two girls, workers in a chemical factory. At their jobs they had a six-hour day, as their work was considered arduous. They received six weeks' holiday on full pay. I was then amazed to hear that, in addition to this, they had each received a grant from the administration of their factory to help them to travel during their holiday. Later on, after more experience, I found that every Soviet organisation has considerable funds which are used exclusively for the

welfare of the workers, and contributions for holiday purposes may be made out of such funds.

A matter which has some bearing on the relationship between the workers in a Soviet enterprise and the administrative staff is the fact that, on such an administrative staff to-day, the vast majority of people are themselves workers who have been promoted. A visit to any Soviet factory shows that in almost every case the manager of that factory was once an ordinary manual worker, and, very often, was a worker in that same factory. The fact that the personnel of the managerial staff is drawn from the rank and file of the workers themselves prevents that difference in attitude which arises when managers and workers are drawn from different classes in society, each with its own traditions and conventions, and even with separate educational systems, as is the case in Britain.

Just as, under Soviet conditions, factory managers are obliged to pay attention to the welfare of the workers as well as to problems of production and costs, it must be pointed out that the Soviet workers are interested in raising production as well as in increasing their immediate welfare. Since 1928 the whole of Soviet industry has been publicly owned and controlled, and production has been subject to a general plan for the purpose of meeting the growing needs of the community. In 1931 unemployment was completely eliminated, and it has not recurred since.

It is under these conditions that the Soviet workers find no reason whatever to restrict production. Further, they have definite reasons for increasing production as rapidly as possible, for this is the only way of raising the general standard of life.

Under capitalism, where part of the value of every

product goes to the employer as profit, the workers in any single enterprise, or in a whole industry, can force the employers to raise their wages or otherwise to improve their conditions by direct action. If strikes are successful, wages rise at the expense of profits, which is satisfactory to the workers though unsatisfactory to the employers. When, however, as in the U.S.S.R. to-day, the whole of the means of production are owned and controlled by public bodies in the public interest, a strike by the workers in any factory or industry for higher wages can only react to the disadvantage of the working population itself. For, by a strike, production is restricted. And this is contrary to the public interest in a community in which every extra product is required and is utilised. A strike, therefore, is to the disadvantage of the workers of the Soviet community as a whole.

The method of fixing wages by means of strikes in a Socialist country is highly undesirable, for it is no longer possible for any workers to raise their wages at the expense of employers' profits. If, as a result of a strike, higher wages are won, then they are won at the expense of the general fund which goes to paying the wages of all citizens. If the coal-miners of the U.S.S.R. strike to-day for more wages, they are in fact fighting to force the Government to give to them what otherwise it would be dividing up among other workers. Strikes, then, in such conditions, can only represent sectional demands against the whole community, and in themselves are contrary to the general interest because they restrict production.

In a diary of a visit of a few weeks' duration to the U.S.S.R., Sir Walter Citrine has said that "it was too much to assume a complete identity of interest between

the director and the workers. The director was concerned with efficiency and output, and the worker with the amount he could earn, and the conditions under which it was earned" (*I Search for Truth in Russia*, p. 129). And, in a later passage, he says that "liberty of association and the right to strike are the essential features of legitimate trade unionism" (p. 361).

It is clear, from what has been said here, that Sir Walter's estimation of the relations between director and worker in the Soviet factory is based on a lack of understanding of the situation. Sir Walter ignores the unique fact that the Soviet director, as part of his job, is responsible for increasing the welfare of the workers. He ignores the fact that the workers, no longer working for an employer who takes part of their product in the form of profit, know that everything they produce is distributed to the community—that is, to themselves. Finally, he ignores the also important fact that, under such conditions as these, a strike is an attack by a small minority on the economic resources of the whole community; and at the same time, by holding up production, reacts to the disadvantage of all citizens.

As to the other matter—freedom of association—no other State in the world has ever given the encouragement to trade unionism which has been given in the U.S.S.R. We have already seen how the young Soviet State, in its first months of existence, made the trade union committees the official representative bodies of the workers in all industrial enterprises, with powers of control over the management. This was a tremendous stimulus to trade union development, as is shown by the figures of trade union membership. In October 1917, at the time when the Soviets seized power, there were 2 million trade unionists. By 1928 this figure had

increased to 11 million, and was 18 million in 1934. No other country can show such figures, and it is absurd to suggest that the U.S.S.R. has ever done anything but encourage, to the greatest possible extent, the organisation of the workers in trade unions.

At the same time, however, as a result of the changes in the relations between worker and administration which have followed the socialisation of industry, the position of the trade unions in the Soviet State is certainly different from their position under capitalism. This matter will concern us more deeply in the following chapter.

A question which will be in the mind of many readers is this: If, in the U.S.S.R., production is organised today in the common interest, so that strikes are contrary to the general interest and so that the aims of factory managers and workers coincide, how do these changes show themselves in the organisation of the factory? Is there not a danger that the workers may be even worse exploited by the State than they previously were by their private employers?

The answer to this question lies in the organisation of the Soviet factory, and, indeed, of every Soviet institution. And this organisation is very different from the factory under capitalism.

No worker in a Soviet factory can go long without becoming aware of the existence of what is known as the "Triangle," and he will find that decisions of the Triangle are made on all kinds of matters which, under capitalism, would lie within the realm of the employer and manager and nobody else. What is this "Triangle"?

We have already seen how, when the factories of Russia were taken over by the Soviet State, their

managers became responsible to the State for the organisation of production and for improving the welfare of the workers. We have also seen how the trade union committee became the official body entitled to represent the workers, and to fight "bureaucratic perversions" on the part of the management. At a very early stage in the history of Soviet industry the device was evolved of joint discussion between manager and trade union representative on all important matters affecting the welfare of the factory and of its workers. Decisions would be issued over the signature of manager and trade union representative together, showing that they had been discussed, both from the point of view of the State and of the workers in the enterprise itself, before a decision had been reached.

But a triangle has three angles, not two. Where is the *third angle to our triangle?*

It may surprise British readers to know that, in the Triangle, which is the supreme authority in every Soviet enterprise, the third angle is the representative of a political party. In the Soviet factory the body which discusses all questions affecting the interests of the workers is the Triangle; consisting of the manager, appointed by a State department and responsible to it; the representative of the trade union, elected by the workers in the factory, and responsible to them; and a representative of the "Party"—that is, of the organisation in the factory of the Bolshevik or Communist Party of the U.S.S.R.

While it may be clear that the manager represents the State, and that the trade unionist represents the workers in the factory, it may well not be clear to the reader exactly whose interests are represented by the Party. This question will occupy us in detail in Chapter

XV. It is important, however, here and now, to state the impression of a foreign worker, taking up a position in the Soviet Union for the first time, on this question.

In every Soviet enterprise I found that the relationship between fellow workers was a friendly one. The status of the manager was that of a human being like every other worker. It was the status of the leading personality in the institution, a fellow-worker but a good one, the person most equipped to take the responsibility for running it. In the average Soviet enterprise to-day over 80 per cent of the workers are members of a trade union. Those who are not members are usually new arrivals, or people who have lapsed from membership, or in a small minority of cases, individuals who have been actually expelled for some offence against union discipline. The elected representative of the trade unionists, then, can be taken as being the most popular figure among the workers of those considered suitable effectively to represent their interests.

Now, quite apart from their official position, their job, or their status as members of the trade union committee, a certain number of persons are "Party members." These people are members of the Party, which is a voluntary political organisation. In general, I always found that the Party members tended to be the most respected workers, whatever their skill or position, and the Party organisation was looked upon as being a kind of organised group of leading personalities, of people who were more devoted than the average to work of social usefulness. The workers as a whole looked to the Party members for leadership, and, in the majority of cases, when asked why they were not themselves "in the Party," the answer was that they

had enough to do already, without taking on extra responsibilities !

I say this now because it is important to realise that in the Soviet factory the representation of the Party, along with administration and trade union, on the Triangle, is looked upon as something absolutely natural. The Party is considered as a sort of organisation of the best and most responsible citizens, and the Triangle thus becomes a body representing the State, the rank-and-file worker, and the organised leadership of the working people as expressed in the Party.

It would entirely misrepresent the situation if the impression were given that control by this Triangle was the only feature which distinguished the Soviet enterprise from similar enterprises in other countries. Actually, while the presence of the elected representative of the trade union causes all important decisions to be made with the co-operation of the workers' representative, it is possible for disputes to arise between the different persons composing the Triangle, and differences may arise between the workers and the administration.

In such cases of " industrial disputes " in the U.S.S.R. there is an elaborate machinery of negotiation and arbitration. Actually, if there is disagreement in the factory itself, it is usual for the trade union or Party representatives to take the question to a higher authority. If the factory trade union committee cannot obtain satisfaction from the administration, then the matter may be carried to the district committee of the union, which will then negotiate with the State organisation which controls the factory concerned. As a rule such matters are settled in this way. But, if necessary, the Central Council of the Trade Unions of

the U.S.S.R. may take up the matter with the Government, if the dispute reaches that length without a settlement being reached. However, under present-day conditions the relations between employing organisations and the trade unions are so amicable that disputes are not likely to get so far before some sort of reasonable settlement is reached.

When it is realised that both the elected representatives of the workers and the appointed representatives of the State have the same common aims—to raise the general standard of life by increasing production and the welfare of the workers concerned as rapidly as possible—it is clear that major industrial disputes are extremely unlikely to arise.

There are disputes of another kind, however, which cannot be settled by simple processes of negotiation. These are disputes in connection with the infringement of the law, as, for example, in cases where factory managers do not enforce the safety measures laid down by law, or do not pay the correct wages to a discharged worker, and so on. In the case of legal disputes, the question can either be referred to a higher authority—in which case the latter may bring pressure to bear on the factory manager to fulfil his obligations—or, if the case is in doubt, then it may be taken to the courts for a decision. These courts, as will be shown in Chapter VII, also represent the working people of the country, and administer the law with a good measure of working-class common sense.

So far we have considered what we may call the "formal" structure of the administration of a Soviet factory. But, quite apart from this, there is a wide range of questions which are decided by the Triangle, not in isolation from the rest of the workers, but in

public discussion with these workers. For example, every year the manager of a Soviet factory addresses a general meeting of the workers, just as the chairman of a British joint-stock company addresses a general meeting of the shareholders. At such a meeting the Soviet manager reports on the past year, and on the fulfilment of the plan of production, and of the plan for improving the general living conditions of the workers.

This report is followed by a general discussion, in which every worker can participate, and in which serious criticisms may be made of the work of individuals and groups of individuals, the members of the administrative staff being not immune from criticism by the rank and file. As a result of such discussions certain workers may be moved to other posts, either upwards or downwards in the scale of responsibilities. The manager of a Soviet factory, in order to fulfil his tasks satisfactorily, must be able, in such meetings, to prove his leadership of those working under him. If, at such meetings, the workers show that they have no faith in their manager, the organisation in charge of the factory will replace him. For a Soviet factory director must be able to lead; he must be recognised as the best representative of all the workers in the factory, or the rank and file will be against him, and there will be continual friction, resulting in inefficiency.

The manager's report on past activity is followed by an outline of the plan for the coming year. This plan is submitted to the manager of the factory from above, from the trust or the local authority to which the factory is responsible. This plan forms part of a general plan for the industry concerned, and for the locality where the factory is placed, and such plans are drawn up from year to year by the State Planning

Commission, subject to instructions given by the Government.

The plan submitted to each separate factory is based on the estimated resources and needs of the community as seen by the State Planning Commission. But it may neglect certain local characteristics, or features of the particular factory. Therefore a discussion of all such plans by all the workers in a Soviet factory is considered essential. For this purpose there are not only general meetings of all workers, but in each workshop discussions take place, and suggestions are made for improving the details of the plan.

It may happen, for example, that a certain shop in a certain factory has been held up for raw materials during the past year. When the workers of such a shop point this out in the meeting, they may suggest that, if only the supply of materials is guaranteed, they will be able to increase output by twice the amount suggested in the plan. Or, to take another example, the workers of a particular workshop may state that if they could have one more machine of a particular kind, they would be able to perform a certain process, now performed by six men, with the use of only one worker. The remaining five would then be available for work where there is at present a shortage of labour, and thus output would be considerably raised.

Such general discussions, in which the plan is considered in detail by all those whose work it is to carry it out, are a feature of all Soviet industry. But discussion of this kind is not all, for throughout the year meetings are held, often monthly, to check up how the plan, once adopted, is being fulfilled.

There are many working people who, though not vociferous at meetings, have opinions to which they

want to give expression. Such workers might say in writing what they would not say in meetings. And we find that in every Soviet enterprise there exists a "Press," in order that such people may air their views.

Few visitors to the Soviet Union return without mentioning the wall-newspaper, prominent in every Soviet organisation, from the Government offices on the Red Square to the workshop in the factory, the classroom in the school, and the cow-shed in the collective farm. The wall-newspaper has already been mentioned in our discussion of education. The young worker leaves school, having written in the wall-newspaper there, to work in a Soviet enterprise, where again the wall-newspaper is a means of expression. And from week to week, and month to month, the newspaper on the wall of the Soviet factory's workshops is a thermometer of public opinion, in which the workers express their views of their own work, of the work of other people, and in which they do not neglect to criticise managers and administrators if they feel that their administration is at fault.

Now who, it may be asked, edits these wall-newspapers in the Soviet factory? Is it the manager? Or perhaps the Communist Party? Or is it just an ordinary working man or woman?

The answer is that the editor of the wall-newspaper in a Soviet factory is appointed by the elected trade union committee, and is responsible to that committee. The wall-newspaper is an organ of the workers, through their trade union. Similarly, it may be asked who organises these meetings of the workers, to discuss the plans of production, and to watch over their fulfilment. Again the answer is: The trade union committee is responsible for organising these meetings.

We are beginning to find that, in the Soviet factory, in whatever direction we turn, we cannot discuss the rights of the workers without coming up against the activities of the trade union committee. The trade union representative sits with the manager; the trade union committee organises mass meetings to discuss the work of the factory; it controls the Press. The conditions of the Soviet wage-earner cannot be considered without, all the time, references being made to the trade unions. For this reason any further discussion of the rights of the Soviet wage-earner brings us to a consideration of the activities of the trade unions in the U.S.S.R.

NOTE.—Since going to press a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. has been held, at which questions were discussed arising out of the new Constitution. At this meeting the work of the factory Triangles was severely criticised as *limiting* democracy at the present time. Zhdanov referred to them as tending to become a "family compact, a conspiracy to make it more difficult to criticise. And *once these three are in agreement, just go and try to* criticise them!"

While, from the standpoint of the worker under capitalism, a situation in which the elected trade union representative participates in running the factory is a giant stride forward, already in the U.S.S.R. they are looking for more effective means of democratic control and criticism. We may expect modifications in the future which will lead to greater independence of administration, party, and trade union leadership, combined with still greater discussion of policy throughout the rank and file of the party and trade union organisations.

CHAPTER IV

THE POWER OF THE TRADE UNIONS

In the Constitution of the Russian Soviet Republic, adopted in 1918, we read that freedom of association is guaranteed to all citizens, and that the Soviet State "lends to the workers all its material and moral assistance to help them to unite and to organise themselves." Lenin referred to the trade unions as a "school of Communism" in which the ordinary working people were able to learn the art of administering their own affairs. And, in my own experience, soon after I had started working in the Soviet Union I was urgently asked to join the trade union, membership of which means a great deal to the working man and woman in the U.S.S.R.

The trade union in every Soviet enterprise makes it its duty to draw all workers into active participation in the work of running the enterprise, and in the social and political life of the country. I remember how, when the question of my trade union membership was first discussed in Moscow, I was asked what "social work" I did. I had already, in my spare time, given a lecture on England. This was "social work"; I was admitted to the trade union.

This term "social work" has a very different meaning in the U.S.S.R. from what it has in Britain.

Every Soviet trade unionist—which means eight out of every ten wage-earners in the U.S.S.R.—is expected to perform some socially useful activity, however small, in addition to his paid work. If you are on your trade union committee, or on the local Soviet, or an organiser of a dramatics group or a sports club, this is social work. If you give a course of lectures in your spare time, or take a study-group, or do voluntary work for the local Soviet or for the trade union committee, this is social work. The Soviet trade unions try to stimulate every citizen to be an active member of society, not only on his paid job, but, in addition to this, to do something of social use, in his spare time.

The Soviet trade unions are represented on the management of the factories, and, higher up, on the boards of the State trusts. In each factory the trade union mobilises the workers for participation in the management. It organises meetings to discuss the welfare of the workers and problems of production; and it runs a Press in which expression is given to the opinions of the workers. But such discussion, in words and in writing, has a purpose: the purpose is the raising of the standard of life of the whole population as rapidly as possible. And this, as we have seen, depends on increasing production. Therefore, on the one hand, the Soviet trade unions are interested in increasing production as the only way in which the standard of life of all the workers may be raised; while, on the other hand, in every Soviet enterprise the trade union is interested in immediately improving the living conditions of the workers, in improving their conditions of work, and, in general, in seeing that the increased production effectively reflects itself in a higher standard of life for the workers concerned.

In considering education we have already made our acquaintance with "Socialist competition," that competition between individual and individual, group and group, for the best results. The young Soviet citizen is trained to compete with others in obtaining the best results. The Soviet worker, in his factory, competes with his fellow worker on the same principle. And it is the trade unions in the U.S.S.R. that are responsible, in the various productive enterprises, for the organisation of this "Socialist competition," which, during the first Five Year Plan, gave rise to the famous "shock-brigade" movement, and, in more recent times, to the movement called after the coal-miner Stakhanov.

It is often said, by those who identify their interests with the survival of capitalism, that Socialism restricts initiative. But they rarely stop to ask: The initiative of whom?

It is certainly a fact that in the U.S.S.R. to-day no person's initiative may express itself by setting up in business on his own. Furthermore, it cannot express itself by a person running a business so successfully that other businesses in the same line are ruined as a result of this successful competition. Also, it is not possible in the U.S.S.R. to show initiative in the private employment or discharging of workers, in dictating to them on what terms they shall work, and so on. And, for the managerial staff of factories, it is not possible to show initiative in a way so common in a capitalist concern—in browbeating the wretched employees, in degrading them, and in using every method, gentle and brutal, to get more work out of them during the working day. Such forms of individual initiative are suppressed in the U.S.S.R.; but these are only very limited examples of personal

initiative; they are simply examples taken from capitalism. On the other hand, as far as concerns the initiative of working people to improve their methods of work and their conditions of work, the Soviet system gives the maximum of opportunity. And, since the whole population to-day consists of working people, this means that personal initiative is not thwarted, but encouraged, in all those activities in which the people of the country spend their time.

One of the main channels of personal initiative in the Soviet Union is Socialist competition. And the trade unions are the organisers of this. Socialist competition first began to be widely organised in 1928. Factories signed contracts with factories for the best fulfilment of their plans. These contracts were drawn up at general meetings of the workers. The Press published weekly accounts of how the competitors were faring, and the winners received banners and prizes. In each separate factory different groups of workers competed against each other for the best results, the factory Press reported the competition, and the winners were rewarded. But this competition was very different from the competition between capitalist firms, or even between groups of workers in capitalist industry. For whereas, under capitalist conditions the winning factory is that which manages to obtain the orders and put the other out of business, and the successful worker replaces the less successful, in the U.S.S.R. no successful factory puts another out of business, and no successful group of workers causes another group to lose their job. On the contrary, when a round of Socialist competition comes to an end, the best workers are often sent from the winning factory to help the more backward one; and, as between groups

of workers, those in the best group help the others to raise their production to the same level. In this way, in the factory as in the school, Socialist competition is a means of stimulating production by introducing the spirit of the playground into the factory, and then ensuring the co-operation of winner and loser for the general benefit.

It was in the course of this Socialist competition that there developed the shock-brigades. These were groups of workers who, in their Socialist competition, achieved outstanding results. The title of "shock-worker" first began to be conferred on those workers who showed the best results in their Socialist competition. But these titles were not simply awarded from above by the manager of the factory, nor were they awarded by the Triangle. The workers themselves, at a trade union meeting, would elect a commission to check up the results of the competition. The commission would then report to the Triangle. The Triangle would make recommendations as to which workers deserved the title of shock-worker, and the meeting would then decide.

In this way, too, workers would be premiumed. There is no doubt that, for the British reader, reports that in the U.S.S.R. certain factory workers are premiumed with money or useful presents sometimes come rather as a shock. Does not this savour of the benevolent boss, who, at Christmas or at other times, presents the most faithful workers with a stimulus to further devotion—a carrot before the noses of all the rest?

And yet such a comparison, to anyone who has worked in a Soviet organisation, is utterly remote from real life. In my work in Moscow I had plenty of opportunity to participate in Socialist competition. We ourselves drew up the contract, which included such

things as quantity and quality of work, punctuality, tidiness at work, and the fulfilling of certain jobs within a certain period of time. When the time was up, we elected our own commissions to check up our fulfilment. Usually, on May 1st and November 7th, the two great revolutionary holidays, Soviet enterprises give premiums to the best workers. It was our elected commission that recommended who should be premiumed. The Triangle, in my own experience, always accepted the decision of the elected commission. The general meeting then endorsed the recommendation. In this way, if any one of us received a month's extra pay as a premium for good work, it was we ourselves who had awarded it, because we felt it was deserved.

During 1935 and 1936 a new form of shock-work has developed in the form of "Stakhanovism." In essence it is a very simple story. A certain coal-miner, by name Stakhanov, working in a pit in the Donetz Basin in the Ukraine, reorganised the work of the group of which he was leader, so that output was greatly increased. His pit newspaper gave the matter publicity, it was taken up as a "scoop" by other newspapers—for the U.S.S.R. needs coal—and the rationalisation proposals of Stakhanov became known throughout the world.

Many managers and engineers did not approve of Stakhanovism, for two main reasons. First, they felt that the wholesale reorganisation of methods of work was their job, not that of the rank-and-file miners. The Soviet Government Press, however, immediately attacked such a view, pointing out that the welfare of the U.S.S.R. depends on the maximum expression of personal initiative by all workers. Secondly, in certain cases the managers and technicians objected to workers reorganising their methods of work, because their

wages then rose considerably above those of the technical and managerial staff! This attitude was also attacked in the Press, and the Stakhanov movement has spread throughout the country.

The Stakhanov movement, and the publicity and encouragement given to Stakhanov and his followers, stimulates every worker, however unskilled, to become a rationaliser, an organiser of his or her own labour. In this way every worker feels encouraged to utilise brain as well as hand. Large numbers of workers become more skilled and earn higher wages. There is a general rise in both material and cultural standards as a result. Further, the leading Stakhanov workers themselves are asked to become teachers of their methods. Stakhanov has been invited back to his native village, to use his organising power to raise production in the collective farm. He also spends much time visiting different coal-mines, teaching the workers there how to reorganise their work for greater efficiency. A rank-and-file miner has become a technical expert and an engineer. And this is happening all the time in the Soviet Union to-day, affecting hundreds of thousands of workers.

It has been mentioned that the Stakhanovite workers raised their wages as a result of their greater output. How are wages paid in the U.S.S.R.? The answer is: Democratically, on the general principle, "To each according to his work."

Every year, in every Soviet enterprise, a "collective agreement" is signed between the trade union and the administration. This agreement states the obligations of the administration towards the workers in the form of cultural and other services, and also includes detailed wage-scales for the enterprise. The general principles

underlying such wage-scales are determined by the central committees of the unions in the various industries, in co-operation with the corresponding administrative State organisation. The details, with adjustments for local conditions, are worked out in each enterprise separately. In this way, once a year at least, every working man or woman, on every job, has the chance to participate in a general discussion of the existing wage-rates. These are reviewed from top to bottom, and every worker has the opportunity to discuss the wage he is getting. At such discussions every anomaly is considered, so that the workers come to a general agreement as to what rate of wages is fair. The collective agreement is drawn up on the basis of such discussions. The result is that, while wages vary considerably, everyone knows the reason for each particular wage. They know, therefore, how they can raise their own earnings; and in our discussion of equality of opportunity we have already seen that there is a chance for practically all workers to raise their qualifications if they wish to do so.

But if earnings are unequal, some must live better than others. Is this Socialism? And, again, it is said that in the U.S.S.R. people may save, and that interest is actually paid by the State on savings, is this so? and may not a leisured class arise in the future as a result?

As far as saving is concerned, to take the latter question first, the Soviet Government actually paid interest on savings, at the rate of 7 and 8 per cent until 1936. This was done during a period when every effort was being made throughout the country to build up the means of production. During such a period every voluntary economy in consumption was of value to the community, for it enabled more resources to be

devoted to production. During the year 1936, however, by Government decree, the rate of interest was halved overnight. Savings had been increasing, and the urgency to encourage economy in consumption was declining. In the future, when the urgency to expand the means of production has fallen still further as compared with consumers' goods, a further decree will abolish interest entirely.

Interest, in the Soviet State, is a purely temporary phenomenon. In no way do the people who receive interest thereby control the general planning of the economic life of the country. They are not employers, and they cannot decide what shall be produced or who shall work, and under what conditions. They do not participate in planning the economic life of the country except as workers and wage-earners. And, as will be seen later, they have no political rights whatever, except as workers. Further, it is the law of the U.S.S.R. that "work is an obligation on all citizens." So it is illegal for them to become a leisured section of the community.

And now as to the question of unequal earnings. This inequality is a feature of Soviet society which has a definite and immediate purpose. This purpose is to achieve the greatest possible development of the forces of production as the only means of raising the general standard of life. And, right from the time of the Revolution, unequal wages have been paid in order to give the greatest stimulus to the best work. It is sometimes stated that the Soviet Union has "returned to" unequal wages comparatively recently. This is not true. Piece-wages have been paid since the Revolution; but, especially during the first Five Year Plan, there were a number of serious anomalies in wage-rates, so that

certain skilled workers were paid less than unskilled, and good workers received no encouragement for their efforts. For that reason, during the first Five Year Plan, stress was laid on the need to work out rational wage-scales in all industries.

Is this Socialism? Karl Marx, the founder of the Communist Movement, considered that unequal earnings would be an essential feature of the first stage of Communist society. In 1875 he wrote that "as *it emerges from capitalist society*, which is thus tainted economically, morally, and intellectually with the hereditary diseases of the old society from whose womb it is emerging," individuals will have to receive from society shares in the total product according to their work.

"But one man will excel another physically or intellectually, and so contributes in the same time more labour, or can labour for a longer time." Already, however, this first stage of Communism "recognises no class differences, because every worker ranks as a worker like his fellows, but it tacitly recognises unequal individual endowment, and thus capacity for production, as natural privileges." As soon as the means of production have been taken out of the hands of private employers, and are socially controlled by public organisations, whether the State, local authorities, or co-operatives, we have Socialism. Under this Socialist system all are workers, whether factory managers or unskilled labourers. But each earns according to his work, the rates of wages being fixed by the people themselves in the collective agreements between their trade unions and the employing organisations.

The fact that wages are not equal in the Soviet Union to-day must on no account be taken to imply that the workers do not receive more according to their

needs than anywhere else. For, as compared with other countries in the world, the Soviet worker already receives many things according to his need. For example, in the case of housing, rent is charged at approximately 10 per cent of earnings, so that he who earns most pays most. Similarly, when a worker is away from work owing to sickness, or because it is necessary to care for another sick person in the family, wages are paid out of the social insurance fund. Wages are paid to women for two months before and two months after childbirth, though they are not called upon to work during this period. And if, by doctor's orders, they must cease work sooner or return later, then they are relieved of work on full pay for a still longer period. Accommodation for children in nurseries and kindergartens, and meals for children at schools, are provided at prices which vary according to the means of the parents. Again, at holiday time, workers are given assistance, both by the factory administrations and by the trade unions, to enable them to have the best kind of holiday, both as recreation and for the benefit of their health.

The administering of social insurance, a vast task which affects the lives of over 20 million wage-earners, is completely in the hands of the Soviet trade unions. In every factory, and in every workshop, a member of the union has the "social work" of "insurance delegate," and is responsible for visiting those who are ill, for seeing that they receive their insurance money, and, wherever necessary, for ensuring that extra help is obtained from the administration and from the social insurance funds. In needy cases it is the duty of this comrade to obtain passes for rest-homes and sanatoria.

While such an insurance delegate is charged with the

work of assisting those who are ill, it is also the work of such a delegate, representing the trade union, to prevent malingering. If a worker is off work through a street accident, and the insurance delegate finds that drunkenness was the cause, then that case will not receive great sympathy, and part of the insurance money may, in such a case, be withheld. Such a worker, of course, may appeal to the general meeting of the union, but his claim in such a case will probably not receive much sympathy.

The first decree of the Soviet Government dealing with social insurance was passed in 1917. All contributions to the social insurance fund were to be paid by the employers, and no contributions were to be levied from the workers. Where the State was the employer, it was responsible for making the necessary contributions. Benefit for absence from work through sickness or involuntary unemployment was to be at approximately average wages. The decree provided for "complete workers' self-government of all insurance institutions."

The control of social insurance until 1933 was in the hands of the Commissariat of Labour, the department of State most able to deal with it. Then, in 1933, it was handed over completely to the trade unions, together with the work of factory inspection and the enforcing of the laws relating to the protection of labour. Sir Walter Citrine, commenting on this growth in the power of the trade unions, remarks that they "were not comparable to any other trade unions in the world. They were, so far as I could see, entrusted with functions which in other countries were carried out by the State itself. They were, in fact, State organisations, and I could not see that they had really any separate existence" (op. cit., p. 185).

Sidney and Beatrice Webb, on the other hand, after an exhaustive study of the internal administration of the U.S.S.R. such as Sir Walter Citrine could not begin to attempt in his tour of a few weeks, write as follows on this matter: "This vast addition to the work and influence of the Soviet trade unions has been curiously misunderstood in some quarters, as a degradation of their position to nothing more than friendly societies! But the trade unions retain and continue to exercise all the influence and authority in the administration of the factory and in the settlement of wages that they have possessed for the past fifteen years. The new control over social insurance, and the entire administration of funds and services of such magnitude, can hardly fail to strengthen the trade unions in their work of raising the standard of life of the workers, and even to knit more closely together their far-flung membership."

However, "the constitutional change, important as it is, will not make so much difference in the administration of social insurance as might be imagined by those conversant only with the constitutions of western Europe or America. It is not, for instance, in any way comparable to the abolition in the United Kingdom of the Minister of Labour, and the transfer of his functions, with regard to unemployment insurance and wages boards, to the British Trades Union Congress *and its General Council!*" (*op. cit., p. 203*). *For,* as the Webbs point out, the Commissar of Labour had always been appointed in the U.S.S.R. from a panel submitted by the trade unions themselves! Sir Walter Citrine refers to the trade unions as State organisations, because they control factory inspection and social insurance. But the question is: Is it not a feature of a democratic State, that the trade unions,

and not the State, should control such matters? Would it be to the benefit of the workers—75 per cent of the population—or to their disadvantage, if their elected trade union representatives administered the social insurance system in Britain?

The experience of the U.S.S.R. has shown that, even in a Socialist State, the official administrator of social insurances may become bureaucratic, and not pay sufficient attention to the individual needs of each case that comes before him. It was to prevent this that the administration of social insurance was turned over to the trade unions, so that to-day in the U.S.S.R. it is the directly elected representatives of the workers, and not employees of State departments, who administer the funds which the factories provide for the insurance of the workers against illness, disability, and old age; and in the case of women; pregnancy and childbirth.

Similarly with regard to the protection of labour. At one time, in the U.S.S.R., the inspection of factories was controlled by a State department—the Commissariat of Labour. The trade unions, if dissatisfied with conditions in any particular place of work, were obliged to call in the expert from the Commissariat. To-day, however, a member of the trade union, elected at a meeting of the members, performs the social work of factory inspection. This "labour protection delegate" is responsible for seeing that the laws are observed and that workers shall receive their full rights.

When I was working in a Soviet office, one of the typists complained that her table was too high. At that time I was trade union organiser. On investigation, I found that the height of tables for typists in the U.S.S.R. is fixed by law. I called upon the labour protection delegate, and she insisted that the administration

provide the typists with new tables. This was done within a few days.

It has already been seen how the factory administration is responsible for the welfare of its workers. According to Soviet law, every organisation must provide meeting and feeding facilities for its workers, accommodation for the trade union office, and nurseries and kindergartens for the children. It is for the trade union committee to see that the management carries out its obligations in these respects, and for this purpose special delegates are elected, to deal with communal feeding, with the care of children, and so on. It is the work of such delegates, out of the social insurance funds, to give assistance to large families with low wages, to arrange for the children of such families to spend their holidays in camps free of charge, and also to deal with such problems as overcrowded housing conditions. Such workers are also responsible for supervising the quality of service provided in the nurseries, kindergartens, and camps.

In this way a low-paid worker with a family will receive considerable free services, provided out of State funds, and administered by elected trade union officials. In this way, too, families in overcrowded conditions may be found other accommodation, the trade union's recommendations being taken into consideration by the administration whenever new accommodation becomes available.

A further word is appropriate here about education. It has already been described how the workers in Soviet institutions have the opportunity for free training in various spheres. It remains to be added here that the supervision of such training, and the task of seeing that it is universally provided, rests with the trade

union members themselves. Thus, during 1934 a campaign was started for classes in all Soviet enterprises for the raising of the qualifications of workers. The cost of the classes was to be borne by the administration, and students were to study half in their own time, and half in their working time. The actual organising of the classes, the determination of what subjects should be studied, and who should be the teachers, were in the hands of the "cultural organisers" appointed by the trade union committees.

Such cultural organisers, responsible to the trade union, are also responsible for all forms of leisure-time activity, such as amateur dramatics and sports. Funds for such activities come partly from the budget of the unions, partly from the "cultural fund" of the administration, to which a certain part of its income is devoted. In this way, while wages are strictly adjusted year by year in order to ensure that each worker shall earn according to his work, the social insurance fund, and other funds to which the various State organisations contribute, provide vast resources to be distributed almost entirely by the trade unions, to meet those needs of the workers that cannot be conveniently met out of their wages. In this way the needs of large families, the need for higher education, cultural life, and sport are satisfied on a scale which is quite out of proportion to the actual money wages.

Another feature of Soviet trade union activity which must be mentioned, since it leads to the linking up of the trade unionists of the U.S.S.R. with members of other unions, with workers in other enterprises, and with citizens whom, otherwise, they might not meet at all, is the institution known as "patronage." It has been described already how, when a group of workers

in Socialist competition happen to surpass another group, or a factory beats another factory, the winner frequently in an organised way gives assistance to the loser. Such assistance is sometimes termed " patronage."

But such " patronage " also exists as a form of social co-operation between organisations of the most varied types. A factory trade union committee may conclude a " patronage agreement " with a regiment in the Red Army, or with a collective farm. By such an agreement the factory will send help to the collective farm during the harvest, and will supply it with certain industrial products throughout the year. The collective farm, in its turn, will supply the factory with agricultural products. In addition, social contact will be preserved between the parties to the agreement, and groups of workers and collective farmers will visit each other socially. Similarly, in the case of the Red Army, the regiment concerned will, among other things, teach the workers and collective farmers to use a rifle, the art of parachute jumping, and so on. In addition, it will come to the assistance of the factory in case of a breakdown, and to the assistance of the farm at harvest time. The members of the Red Army will attend social functions at the factory or farm, and workers and collective farmers will attend the functions of the Red Army. The workers in the factory will undertake certain technical jobs for their regiment; the collective farmers will send it agricultural produce. In this way the main sections of the Soviet population, workers, peasants, and soldiers, are brought into close social and practical contact with one another.

Again, we have referred to arrangements by which, under Soviet conditions, the amateur dramatics club at the factory obtains the assistance of professional

theatrical workers. This, as a rule, is also arranged by the trade union. Sometimes they pay professional instructors, but on other occasions a "patronage" agreement is concluded with some theatre. In such a case as this the theatre workers undertake to give assistance to the factory dramatic group in their spare time, and the workers, in return, may undertake certain technical services for the theatre. Similarly, a well-known writer may take patronage over one or two workers' literary circles. He will instruct them in their work. And he may try out his new books on them, and they will make their criticisms. In such a way the "intellectual" is brought into contact with the working masses of the population. How many first-class British writers to-day know the effect of their writings on the majority of the people—the 75 per cent of wage-earners? Do they even imagine that the majority of the people—the wage-earners—might one day read their books?

This brings us to another aspect of "patronage"—the connection between trade union and State. So far, in considering the trade union as representing the working people, as distinct from the administration appointed by the State, we have *not* dealt at all with the positive part played by the trade unions in administering the Soviet State itself. Actually, this question will be dealt with more fully in Chapter XIII, after we have described the basic structure of the Soviet State.

However, it is important here to record the fact that the Soviet trade union organises patronage, not only between collective farms and factories, factories and Red Army regiments, but also between factories and Government departments, such as the Commissariats of Finance, of Health, of Education, and even over the

office of the President of the U.S.S.R. himself, Comrade Kalinin. Thus, when working hours are over, a number of workers from the most important Moscow factories proceed to the offices of the Government, there to do important administrative work. And, locally, thousands of workers, when working hours are over, proceed to the offices of their local Soviet, there to work in its various departments. But this subject deserves almost a whole chapter to itself, and it shall have it.

The Soviet enterprise, we find, is a complex community in which the organisation of the working people, the trade union, plays a leading part. Personal responsibility on the part of everyone for his own job, together with collective responsibility for the work as a whole, is the characteristic of the Soviet enterprise. And collective responsibility means collective discussion and criticism; it means that the people must run their own affairs. Under such conditions, with a reasonable working day and reasonable holidays, the worker even on a conveyor retrieves something of the joy of the craftsman. The factory is his, and he and his fellows benefit from more efficient and increasing production. He can always plan improvements in the productive processes, and knows that they will be adopted. Even on what, in itself, is the least interesting work, a certain standard of excellence can be obtained, and Socialist competition introduces even into the sweeping of a floor some of the thrill of a game of football. Under these conditions the Soviet worker feels that he is working for himself and for all, and he takes a pride in even the simplest work, a pride which it is hard to feel when the result is entirely to the benefit of somebody else, and when the greater the result, the nearer is brought the spectre of unemployment in the future.

CHAPTER V

CO-OPERATIVES IN A CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH

In the Soviet Union the land and the factories, the mines and the dwelling-houses, are owned either by the State or by co-operative societies. And the State, as we shall see in detail in Part II, represents the people who work. It seems fair, then, to give to the Soviet State the title of "Co-operative Commonwealth." But, once the State itself is a co-operative organisation of the people, there is no longer a conflict in principle between State organisations and co-operative societies. In some spheres the State may perform functions more effectively; in others, the co-operatives. It is in this light that we must approach the problem of co-operation in the U.S.S.R. at the present time.

Consumers' co-operation was encouraged in Tsarist Russia as one of the few working-class activities which the police considered "safe." The people who ran the co-operatives under such conditions were not the type that, in 1917, were likely to support the Revolution. However, as co-operation was an extremely important means of combating the private trader in the interests of the working-class consumers, the Soviet State gave every encouragement to the development of co-operative societies of consumers. These did not pay dividends, but supplied goods at lower prices than the private traders. When the private traders put a new

product on the market, the co-operatives sold it cheaper, and the community gained as a result. By 1934 there were about 73 million members of consumers' co-operative societies in the U.S.S.R.

The Soviet co-operators elect their management committees. The various committees hold congresses, and a federal union of all consumers' co-operative organisations, Centrosoyuz, co-ordinates all the co-operative trading in the U.S.S.R.

But co-operative trade has certain disadvantages. The most important of these, particularly to the town dweller, is the need to purchase in special shops, often some way from home. In a village, where distances anyway are not great, such an inconvenience is reduced to a minimum.

Soon after the beginning of the first Five Year Plan in 1928 the opening of co-operative shops at factories and other places of work began to take place on a large scale. At the same time, during the years 1926 to 1929, private trade was practically extinguished by heavy taxation on all private traders. The co-operatives were left with an almost complete monopoly of trade.

During this period, owing to the rapid growth of the town population, leading to a great increase in the demand for all products consumed by the working people, and owing to the reorganisation of agriculture on a co-operative basis, which caused a temporary fall in the supply of foodstuffs, rationing of all food products and many industrial products was introduced as a temporary measure. Through the co-operatives, rationed quantities of goods could be obtained at comparatively low prices. Extra quantities could be obtained at State shops, but much higher prices were charged.

When, in 1931, I started to work in the U.S.S.R.,

the former importance of co-operatives as a means of carrying on trade in the interests of the consumer, in competition with private traders who traded for profit, had more or less dwindled to nothing. Since there were no longer private traders, it was possible to purchase rationed goods at low prices in the co-operatives, or unrationed goods in co-operative or other shops at high prices. The quantity of the rations allowed, and the general level of prices, were already being fixed by the State. It was no surprise to me, or to others who were working in the Soviet Union when, in 1932, the co-operatives which were attached to the factories were transferred to the control of the factory administration.

As a result of this change, the manager of the factory shop, instead of being appointed by a committee elected by the customers, was appointed by the administration of the factory. At first sight this suggests that the control over the shop by the workers was slackened, but this was not the case. For, as we have shown, the representatives of the trade union participate in the management of the Soviet factories. When, in 1932, the co-operatives were transferred to the factory management, this simply meant the replacing of one form of workers' control by another. Previously, the co-operators had elected a special committee to run the shop. Now the trade union committee appointed a delegate to supervise the running of the shop in the interests of all the workers. But the director of the factory was now responsible for seeing that the shop obtained adequate supplies. In this way the shop, like the dining-room and housing, became one of the responsibilities of the factory management, controlled by the trade union committee.

Since there was no longer private trade, this question of the status of co-operative trade and State trade no longer was a matter of principle, but of expediency. Whether the State controlled trade, or co-operative societies, in either case it was the people themselves. It was necessary simply to procure the best system of organisation. And it proved that the director, together with the trade union committee of a factory, was more capable of controlling the work of the shop than a co-operative committee had been; for they represented the same people, but formed a more powerful body. The factory administration, it was found, was more able to supply the needs of the workers, for it was more influential in getting supplies than a committee whose only justification for existence was the running of a single shop.

Outside the factory, until 1935, the co-operatives had their own shops. However, with the growth of State trade the decisive factor in price-fixing became the State. As a result, all difference between co-operative prices and State prices disappeared. With the abolition of rationing, which rapidly followed the record harvest of 1933, it became no longer expedient for workers to be attached to particular shops where they drew their rations. As a result, all shops were thrown open to the public, and all goods were sold at uniform prices. This led, in 1935, to a Government decree which transferred all the co-operatives in the towns to the Commissariat of Home Trade. At the same time it was pointed out that in the villages the main distributing apparatus was still in the hands of the co-operatives, and that these were not adequately meeting the rising demands of the villagers. It was, therefore, decreed that all their resources should thenceforth

be devoted to the supplying of the needs of the villages.

In the winter of 1935 and 1936 I visited certain villages a considerable distance from Moscow. The co-operative shops were well stocked with goods. Turnover had greatly increased since the decree had abolished co-operative trade in the towns. Nobody that I met looked upon the change as anything but an improvement, both in town and country. In the country, the co-operatives supplied goods which had previously gone to the town shops. In the towns, the Commissariat of Home Trade redecorated the shops of the co-operatives and re-stocked them with those increasing supplies of goods which industry was making available. At the same time prices continued to fall, while the quality of goods improved.

But such a change, it may be suggested, while it may have improved supplies, was an attack on the self-government of consumers. The answer to this is that, under Soviet conditions, it would be quite incorrect to suggest that the State shop is not subject to the control of the consumer. As a State concern, there is Socialist competition between the State shops, as there is between the State factories. The workers in the shops are interested in giving good service, just as the workers in the factories are interested in turning out good products. But, secondly, the consumer is invited to participate in judging such Socialist competition. No Soviet shop is without a "complaints book," in which customers write their comments. Bad service may be reported, not only to the Commissariat of Home Trade, or to the local Soviet, but to the Press, and, as will be shown in the next chapter, the Soviet Press is one of the main ways of ventilating criticism. Finally, the State shops organise from time to time

conferences of consumers, to discuss what goods should be supplied, and how the shops should be run.

Returning from Moscow to London in 1936, I discovered that, whereas three years previously I had found London bearing an aspect of a land of plenty in comparison with Moscow, in 1936 no such contrast was visible. And when I went to buy some luscious fruit in a London shop and was given goods which were about half the size of those displayed in the window, I realised what it was to be once more in a land of private trade ! For in the U.S.S.R., both in the State shops in the towns and in the co-operatives in the villages, the goods supplied are the goods which are displayed. Since trade is not for profit, and since the plan of every co-operative and State shop includes the supply of given *quantities* of goods of given *quality*, there is no motive for adulteration, or for the sale of inferior goods. Of course, it still sometimes happens that a worker in a Soviet shop may try to make a small personal profit by selling inferior goods at the price of superior ones. But in the U.S.S.R. this is a criminal offence, while in Britain it is good business !

Consumers' co-operation in the U.S.S.R. to-day continues in the Soviet villages, where there are about 40,000 co-operative shops. In the future, the question of whether the co-operative or the State shop will be the final centre of village trade will be decided, not as a matter of principle, but as a matter of expediency. If, with the growth of the production of consumers' goods, the Commissariat of Home Trade opens shops in the villages, and if, as a result of its centralisation and vast economic resources, it is able to give better service than the co-operatives, then State trade will replace co-operative trade. If, on the other hand, the efficiency of

co-operative trade exceeds that of State trade, then the co-operatives will remain supreme. Essentially, no matter of principle is now involved, for in the U.S.S.R. the State itself is a vast co-operative commonwealth, and the existence of co-operatives within co-operatives, a complex structure of wheels within wheels, is only justified in so far as better service is provided as a result.

Another example of co-operation, of considerable importance in the Soviet town, is the housing co-operative. One of the first decrees of the Soviet Government in 1917 transferred all existing housing accommodation to the local Soviets, to be distributed according to the needs of the population. They were also empowered to build houses. But at that time there were vast demands on the resources of all Soviet authorities, both local and national. The Soviet State, therefore, also encouraged the formation of housing co-operatives, societies of individuals who desired to obtain better accommodation and who subscribed to the co-operative a certain portion of their income towards the building of blocks of flats. Such co-operatives were run by the members, who elected their boards of management and paid their own officials. At the present time a substantial portion of the housing accommodation in Soviet cities belongs to such co-operatives.

In the Soviet housing co-operative an elected committee of the members is responsible for supervising the building of the houses. As each building is completed, the members who are first on the list move into the flats. For the administration of the house they elect their own house committee, which employs a paid manager to carry on the work of administration. The manager is responsible for collecting rent, which is fixed at about 10 per cent of the earnings of each

householder. This rent goes entirely to the upkeep of the house, central heating and water supply, repairs and the decoration of the flats. Out of this 10 per cent the manager is paid, and the house committee is responsible for seeing that the funds are wisely expended. Sometimes, of course, there may be a gross act of mismanagement. In a house where I lived for over a year in Moscow the manager absconded, with a balance of 6,000 roubles! An emergency meeting of the inhabitants was called and a new committee was elected, instructed to be more vigilant in their appointment of a new manager. I do not know whether the militia caught the thief, and whether the money was recovered, as I left Moscow soon after.

I do not tell of this incident as being in any way typical. But it is essential for the reader always to remember that Soviet citizens are human beings like everybody else, with their merits and their frailties. So long as there exist individualists in Soviet society, putting their immediate private interests before those of the community, there will be cases of persons in positions of trust betraying this trust. Such cases are dealt with by the Soviet courts of law as criminal offences; they have not yet been completely stamped out.

With regard to housing, then, we find a widespread system of co-operation, in which the dwellers in blocks of flats govern their own affairs. In cases where houses are owned by the local Soviet, as is the case with the greater part of town housing, or by industrial enterprises, as occurs in certain cases, the system of management is in general similar to that of the co-operatives. In these cases the house manager, however, is appointed by the local housing trust, subject to the authority of the Soviet, or by the administration of the factory,

subject to the co-operation of the trade union, instead of by the elected committee of the inhabitants. At the same time, however, a house committee is also elected by the inhabitants in all State-owned houses, and the manager must work in co-operation with this committee, spending the money collected in rents on repairs and renewals, and in the general interest of the occupants.

The elected house committee is the Soviet substitute for the private landlord, the actual owner of Soviet houses is either the State or a co-operative of the occupants. Ultimately, it is clear, as in the case of consumers' co-operation, the system of housing control will develop according to expediency. If administration by the committees of co-operatives proves less efficient than administration by the State housing trusts, the latter will replace the former. If otherwise, the co-operative houses will develop in relation to the State houses. This is a matter which the future will decide.

So far we have been concerned with those forms of co-operative organisation of which the ordinary wage-earners are members. But not all producers in the U.S.S.R. are wage-earners; a vast number of them are members of producers' co-operatives. In industry, a very small part of total production is carried on by co-operatives of producers. In agriculture by far the greatest part of the total output is produced in co-operatives of peasants, collective farms. Since, in principle, the organisation of an industrial co-operative in no wise differs from that of agriculture, and since agricultural co-operation is by far the most important form of producers' co-operation in the U.S.S.R., we shall examine in detail the organisation of the collective farms, bearing in mind that, in the towns, on a small scale, similar organisations of industrial producers also exist

From the very foundation of the Soviet State encouragement was given to the peasants, small individual producers, to pool their land and instruments of production, and to farm on a large scale. It was emphasised that the peasants themselves must organise such co-operative farms on their own initiative, and that such a system, if enforced from above, would not work because it would not have the support of the people who, in the nature of things, had to run it. But so long as the actual method of cultivation was limited to the wooden plough there was little to be gained from cultivating the land in large areas rather than in small strips. Therefore collectivisation did not take place on a large scale during the first decade of the Revolution.

But so long as agriculture continued to be carried on by the individual peasant households, each working on its own little strip of land, it was bound to be inefficient. Therefore the supply of food to the people of the country was bound to be constantly menaced as a result of a bad harvest. For this reason alone it was essential to introduce large-scale farming. And this could only be done in one of two ways. On the one hand, the same method could have been adopted as had been adopted everywhere else in the world—the subsidising of every farmer who was better off than the majority, helping him to become a large-scale farmer with many possessions and many labourers. But this, it will be noted, would have meant capitalism in the village, and the employment of labour by private individuals for profit.

This system was turned down by the Soviet Government, as giving rise to a new powerful capitalist class controlling the main food supplies of the country, and thus a menace to the very existence of the Soviet State itself. The remedy for the backwardness of Soviet

agriculture had to be a Socialist remedy, and must lie, as Stalin pointed out in 1928, "in a transition from small, backward, and scattered peasant farming to concentrated, large-scale social farms, equipped with machinery, armed with the knowledge of science, and capable of producing the maximum quantity of marketable grain. The solution lies in the transition in agriculture from individual peasant farming to collective and communal farming" (Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. II, p. 102).

This transition was not easy. It was necessary to persuade the peasants to undertake the new methods. But that could only be done by making available for them the modern machinery which is essential to efficient large-scale production. Again, it was essential to show them that this increased production would enable them to obtain larger quantities of industrial products and to raise their standard of life. As Stalin put it in 1928: "We must maintain the present rate of development of industry, and, at the first opportunity, still more accelerate it, in order to pour cheap goods into the rural districts and obtain from them the maximum amount of grain; in order to supply machines to agriculture, particularly to the collective and Soviet farms, and in order to industrialise agriculture and increase its marketable surplus" (ibid., p. 108).

From 1928 onwards a widespread campaign was started to draw the peasants into collective farms. They were offered agricultural machinery and modern fertilisers, together with the assistance of trained experts, if they would pool their land and their instruments of production, elect their own boards of management, and farm the land co-operatively. For four years the countryside was in a state of turmoil. The peasants had no experience of large-scale agriculture, or of

co-operative and disciplined large-scale production. Through the Soviets they had administered education and health services, and had built roads. But they had not had any experience at collectively managing the complicated processes of production, and they were not acquainted with modern methods.

The new system was violently opposed in the village by those few peasants who had larger farms, and who were small employers. They knew that they would lose their power in the new collectives, and used every method to prevent the success of the new co-operative system. As a result, the level of agricultural production sharply fell, and only began to recover with the record harvest of 1933, a record for the whole of Russian history.

Naturally the details of the best form of organisation for the collective farms had to be worked out as a result of experience. Many changes were made as work proceeded, and only in 1935 was a special congress called, of the best collective farmers elected from all over the U.S.S.R., to adopt a "model constitution" for all the collective farms throughout the country. This congress discussed in detail a project submitted by the Government, a number of alterations were made, and then the model constitution was finally adopted by the congress. The Government accepted the draft which the congress put forward, and this has since become the basic structure of every collective farm.

In the collective farm all the land is cultivated collectively with the exception of small plots surrounding the houses of the members, which may be used by the peasant families for their own purposes as gardens and orchards and grazing-ground for small livestock. All instruments of cultivation, with the exception of simple gardening tools, are owned by the collective.

All livestock, with the exception of a few animals for household use, is also owned by the collective.

The management of the collective farm is in the hands of an elected committee of the members. The management is allowed to appoint members to different jobs throughout the collective. The work is done in "brigades," each with its own responsibilities, and competing with each other for the best results, just like groups of factory workers. The members of the collective farm do not draw wages, since they are not employees but joint owners. Each year, after the harvest, the total year's income is calculated, in terms of revenue from the sale of products during the year together with all unsold produce in hand. After all debts have been paid, a certain quota is set aside for the following year's seed fund, for the extension of the farm, and for social services to members. According to the model statutes, not more than 10 per cent of the total revenue goes to this latter purpose. The rest is divided among the inhabitants, "to each according to his work."

The unit by which work is measured in the collective farm is the "work-day." This is roughly the amount of work which an ordinary unskilled worker can do in an eight-hour day. More than eight hours of ordinary unskilled work, or eight hours of skilled work, count as more than one work-day. A tractor driver in eight hours may be credited with, say, two work-days, as a skilled worker. The actual rates, like the actual rates of wages in the factory, are determined at general meetings.

I remember, in a village near Moscow, listening to an indignant old peasant woman, very rheumatic, who was furious because, during twelve hours' work in the fields, she had not earned credit for one work-day. When I realised, however, that she was over seventy,

and was already in receipt of an invalid pension, this fact hardly reacted to the discredit of the collective. If pensioned invalids of seventy were estimated to be only 30 per cent less efficient than the healthy collective farmer, this would not say much either for the average collective farmer or the system ! I calmed the old lady by telling her that she should bring up the matter at the next meeting, and she showed signs of anticipating a really good row when the next general meeting was held !

In another collective farm, run by German peasants in the Ukraine, a large notice-board in the office displayed the names of all the members of the collective, with their earnings in terms of work-days every month. The manager received a regular 40 work-days a month, whereas the skilled workers, tractor drivers, milkmaids, and so on, received up to 60 and 70 work-days. In this farm, as a result of careful accounting, every member received an advance every month on the estimated year's income. The manager told me with pride that neighbouring farms were now going to copy this method.

In the Soviet factory, as we have seen, and also in the State farms which cultivate a small proportion of the total area of the U.S.S.R., the administrative staff is appointed by the public authorities, and the trade union is the representative organisation of the workpeople. In the collective farm the managerial staff is elected by the members, and must organise production in the general interest, and also supervise the social services and the raising of the general cultural life of the community. The collective farm, as a self-governing organisation of citizens, is similar in status to a trade union. Its functions include, however, the organisation of production, as well as the provision of insurance for its members against sickness and old age, communal

feeding establishments, nurseries and kindergartens, and opportunities for higher education on the part of its members. Part of its funds, according to the decisions of general meetings, are devoted also to cultural and sport activities, the building of clubs and theatres and rest-homes for the members.

It is common nowadays in the U.S.S.R. to meet peasant students in the universities, sent there by their collective farms. In such cases maintenance allowances are often paid by the collective farms themselves to their members who are studying. There are collective farms which have their own theatres, built out of their own funds together with grants from the State, and which have permanent repertory companies.

And in the collective farm, as in the factory, Socialist competition and the wall-newspaper are universal features. Even the Stakhanov Movement, originating in a coal-mine, has spread through the collective farms of the U.S.S.R. The cultivator of sugar-beet, Maria Demchenko, has won fame throughout the country for the results which have been obtained under her leadership in a collective farm in the Ukraine. And not only do we read of Maria Demchenko on her farm, but also of how she, together with leading Stakhanov workers from all over the U.S.S.R., has visited Moscow and attended conferences with the Government. At such a conference Maria Demchenko promised Stalin that she would obtain a certain yield of sugar-beets on her land, and fulfilled that promise. The Soviet Government frequently summons conferences of the leading workers in all branches of Soviet life. Stakhanov and Maria Demchenko meet Kalinin, Molotov, and Stalin, discuss their problems, and their plans for the future. In this relationship with the working people the Soviet

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Government is simply repeating what every Government has always done in relation to the ruling class: it holds conferences with them to discuss policy. In the Soviet Constitution there is nothing to say that the Government shall hold conferences of workers to discuss policy with them, but, as a workers' Government, it does hold such conferences. In Britain there is no law stating that the Government shall discuss matters behind the scenes with big business and the bankers, but we know that on the quiet it does hold such discussions, and the opinions of these people go a very long way towards determining the essentials of Government policy. In the U.S.S.R., however, such conferences take place in the open, as part of the recognised working of Soviet democracy, whereas, in the British system, conferences between Government and bankers are more often than not held on the quiet, since it is not considered expedient to advertise the extent to which a small plutocracy influences policy in our kind of democracy.

While co-operatives both of consumers and producers in the Soviet town are to-day of comparatively small importance, in the village they exist on a vast scale, both for consumption and production. The collective farm is the main form of productive organisation in the Soviet countryside, and will continue to be so as long as co-operative production proves to be more efficient than State farming.

And why, it may be asked, has collective farming proved more popular than working in State farms? Is it that the material conditions are superior?

Certainly, up to the present, it cannot be said that in general the material conditions of collective farmers are necessarily better than those of workers doing

similar work on a State farm. Where a collective farm reaps a good harvest, the members perhaps receive more than workers on the State farms doing similar work for a regular wage. But if the harvest is poor, then the collective farmers receive less than those who, on a State farm, are guaranteed a fixed wage for a given amount of work, whatever the harvest may be like.

No, it is not the actual material standard which determines the attitude of the Soviet peasantry to collective farming. The peasant for centuries, however poor he has been, has cultivated his own land, and has owned his own means of production, however primitive. Only when economic conditions became intolerable was it usual for the peasants to leave their plots of land, and to trek to the towns in search of work as wage-earners. Certainly, the rise in the status of the wage-earner which has taken place since the Soviets seized power has made wage-earning more attractive to the peasantry, but they still like to exercise direct ownership over their means of production, rather than indirect, through the State.

As a result of this attitude the peasants of the U.S.S.R. have shown an enthusiasm for forming their own producers' co-operative organisations and running them themselves, which they never showed for becoming wage-earners in State farms. It is as a result of this preference of the people for a particular form of organisation that this form has become widespread throughout the countryside. In the future, according to the desires of the people themselves, collective farms may, or may not, change their form, and may, or may not, become indistinguishable, as regards their organisation, from the State farms and other enterprises which are run by the State at the present time.

CHAPTER VI

A PEOPLE'S PRESS

In Tsarist Russia, 80 per cent of the population were unable to read or write. In the first decree of the Commissar of Education, after October 1917, it was stated, as has been already pointed out, that "every democratic Power must, in the domain of education, in a country where illiteracy and ignorance reign supreme, make its first aim the struggle against this darkness. It must acquire in the shortest time *universal literacy.*" The people, under the Soviets, began to learn to read and write, to read the newspapers and to write in them. For, as we have also already seen, the newspaper has been introduced into every organisation in the U.S.S.R.

The making of the Press really available to the people was not something which could be done without procuring the necessary supplies of paper and ink, and the printing presses with which newspapers are printed. But in 1917, when the Soviets seized State power, these things were practically all in the hands of the well-to-do—of those who were rich enough to own newspapers, the employers of labour. Therefore it is not surprising to find, in the first Soviet Constitution of 1918, the following clause: "To ensure for the workers effective liberty of opinion, the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic puts an end to the dependence

of the Press upon capital; transfers to the working class and to the peasants all technical and material resources necessary for the publication of newspapers, pamphlets, books, and other printed matter: and guarantees their unobstructed circulation throughout the country."

The Soviet Government realised that freedom of the Press could only exist together with the ownership of the printing presses and the other means for publishing newspapers. Therefore, so long as the printing presses and stocks of paper were in the hands of the well-to-do, there was only freedom of the Press for the well-to-do. Effective freedom of the Press for the working people could only be guaranteed by giving the ownership of the newspapers to these same working people. Hence the abolition of the private Press in the early days of the Revolution; its place being taken by the Press of the people themselves, from their wall-newspapers in the factories to the newspapers of the Soviet State itself.

The policy of putting an end to illiteracy, together with the transferring of the printing presses to the organisations of the working people, caused a tremendous development of the Press. The percentage of adult citizens who can read and write in the Soviet Union to-day is about 90. The daily circulation of newspapers has increased from 2·7 million in 1913 to 36·4 million in 1934, and the planned circulation for 1937 is 66 million. The only limit to the circulation of a Soviet newspaper to-day is the amount of paper available, so that we see how such a cultural question as the availability of literature has its economic foundation. Any evening in Moscow to-day, queues are visible about five o'clock, waiting for the evening paper. After an

hour or so all copies may be sold out. But this is not due to a shortage of papers compared with old Russia, for the circulation has greatly increased. It is due to the fact that the demand is now so great that limited resources of paper prevent enough being printed.

It would be a mistake to consider the large printed papers, whose daily circulation has been stated, to be fully representative of the Press in the Soviet Union. For, in addition to national and local papers, there are the factory papers and news-sheets, and the wall-newspapers which are everywhere. In considering the Press we must remember all these, from the wall-newspaper in the factory to the greatest national newspapers, *Izvestia*, organ of the Government; *Pravda*, the newspaper of the Party; and *Trud*, the paper of the trade unions.

For some months, while working in Moscow, I was the editor of a wall-newspaper. Compared with the editorship of any kind of newspaper or magazine in Britain, work on a Soviet publication is particularly onerous, for the editor, whether of the wall-newspaper in a workshop or of one of the national papers, has certain obligations which do not exist for the newspaper editor under capitalism.

We all read, from time to time, the correspondence columns of our newspapers. We know how readers express their views on every subject under the sun, from the origin of the name of Smith to the question of whether the nightingale that Mr. Jones heard in Wimbledon was the first or the second to have been heard this year by a reader of a certain well-known paper. And we know that, as far as the editor is concerned, his only job is to see that the most interesting letters are printed, and, when heated controversies

show signs of becoming out of hand, to terminate them abruptly with the short note in italics: "*This correspondence is now closed.*"

The editorial committee of a Soviet newspaper, whether of a factory wall-newspaper or of the Government's newspaper *Izvestia*, does not deal with its correspondence in this light-handed way. For on every Soviet newspaper, from the very smallest to the very largest, there are members of the editorial staff whose entire work is to deal with the complaints of readers, to investigate these complaints, and to see what can be done to remedy their grievances, if any real grievances exist.

To the wall-newspaper, for example, a worker may write to say that, after being off work owing to illness, he did not receive the full amount due to him. Another may write to say that a certain foreman appeared at work with the signs of drink on him, and such a writer may include a cartoon of the foreman concerned! Another may say that the safety devices on certain machines are inadequate; and another may write that, in spite of continual complaints, the administration continues to delay in the supplying of materials, and as a result the workers are being held up at their job.

The editorial staff of the wall-newspaper, receiving these topical comments on the life of the factory, is under an obligation, not merely to publish them, but to investigate the complaints; and to publish the letters with a statement of what has been done to redress the grievances expressed. In the case of the inadequate insurance money, the social insurance delegate must be asked to investigate. If he considers that there has been no injustice, he will be asked to write a short reply. If there has been an injustice, then the editorial

board will announce that the matter has been set right. In the case of the foreman, if the facts are as stated, the article and cartoon will most certainly appear, with still more caustic remarks by the editorial staff, and possibly an appeal to the administration to take disciplinary measures. In the case of safety devices, this is a matter for the labour protection delegate of the trade union, who will be asked to make a statement on the matter. And, finally, where the administration holds up the supplies of materials it is the job of the editorial board itself to move heaven and earth to make the administration take the necessary steps to supply materials on time, and thus to avoid the delays.

The work of the editorial board of a wall-newspaper, then, is not simply the publication of a newspaper. It is also the investigation of complaints and the removal of grievances; so that the Press becomes an effective weapon of the people in the fight for better conditions in every respect. The national Press of the U.S.S.R. in no way differs from the local Press in this matter.

It will be remembered by many readers how, during the years of the first Five Year Plan, the most harrowing stories appeared in our Press in Britain about the failure of one large Soviet factory after another to achieve the planned output. And, to the confusion of the British reader who was sympathetic to the Soviet Union, Soviet sources would usually be quoted as the basis for these stories. We would read how at Stalingrad, for example, two tractors would come off the conveyor on one day, thirty the next, then a hundred, and then down to two again as some process in the production went wrong and held up the whole job. And editorial comments in the British Press would ruthlessly

point out that " these Russians " would never learn to run machinery, and the whole Five Year Plan was therefore a giant fiasco.

But in spite of this adverse comment, and in spite of, or perhaps because of, the fact that it was the Soviet Press which gave full publicity to the difficulties of Stalingrad and other vast new enterprises, they have pulled through. And when we look more closely at the kind of facts which received such loud publicity at that time we find that all these difficulties and disorders which accompanied the first Five Year Plan were not necessarily peculiar to Soviet conditions, but operate in one form or another in every new large industrial enterprise anywhere. The fundamental difference between such enterprises in the U.S.S.R. and similar ones in capitalist countries is that in the Soviet Union their every difficulty was publicised in the Press, whereas, in the conditions of capitalism, the same difficulties are completely hushed up !

Suppose that a new Ford plant, after it has started working, for a few weeks turns out only half the planned output. Suppose that this story leaks into the Press. Down go the shares of Ford Ltd. ; the credit of the firm seriously suffers ; panic results. Such a panic, in certain cases, is all that is necessary to ruin a new firm which is just starting to operate its first factory.

But in the Soviet Union every one of those same difficulties, hushed up under capitalism because they damage the reputation of a firm, are given the fullest publicity in the Press. For, by interesting the whole of the people in those things which are unsatisfactory as well as in those which are satisfactory, the Soviet Press stimulates citizens to improve matters, and as a result the whole community is benefited.

It is as a result of this policy that, in the Soviet Press, the most appalling stories of all kinds of public abuses are given publicity. I remember how, a few years ago, a certain anti-Soviet propagandist organisation in this country issued a leaflet containing parallel quotations from the British publication *Russia To-day* and from the Soviet Trade Union newspaper *Trud* (*Labour*). In *Russia To-day* it was stated, for example, that 1,000 new nurseries had been opened for the working-class mothers. And, from *Trud*, there was quoted a horrifying story of how, in the town of, say, Minsk, at the "Hammer and Sickle" Factory, a new crèche had been opened where the floors were damp, and where, in the near neighbourhood, there was a pig-sty, the smell of which infected the whole establishment. By taking a whole series of such monstrosities, quoted in *Trud* as examples of disgraceful work on the part of one or another trade union organisation, or on the part of the administration of one or another factory, the leaflet was able to offset each statement from *Russia To-day* about vast developments affecting the lives of 170 million people with a story of one fiasco, affecting the lives of some 1,000 people at the most, quoted in the Soviet Press in order to reduce such disorders to a minimum.

The Soviet citizen, writing to a newspaper in the Soviet Union, is aware of the fact that in expressing his opinion he is starting a sequence of actions which will, if his complaints are justified, lead to the removal of the grievance. In this way the Soviet citizen enjoys effective expression of opinion of a twofold nature. First, he can complain in the Press about things which, in other countries, it is impossible for the ordinary worker to criticise at all. Second, he knows that, when

he has spoken, the authorities concerned will take action to see that the grievance is dealt with.

When I say that similar people, in other countries, cannot give public expression to the kind of very vital complaints which find their way in thousands into the Soviet Press, I have in mind the fact that, in Britain to-day, if I wish to express dissatisfaction about the service rendered by a firm or by an organisation, or with the work of an individual, I have no right to call the attention of public opinion to the matter. For, in Britain, the airing of any grievance, however justifiable, against a person, or against an organisation, if it is likely to damage their business or their reputation, is libellous, and the person airing such a grievance may be sued for it. Not only do private firms hush up the kind of difficulties to which the Soviet Press gave publicity in the case of Stalingrad, but ordinary citizens, with grievances against all kinds of organisations and officials, are not permitted to direct public opinion to such grievances through the Press. The only form of action which is possible is litigation, and the cost of this is such that only major grievances of the well-to-do can be adequately settled in this way.

The Soviet Press, then, gives voice to two kinds of criticism which are more or less non-existent in the Press of Britain: criticism of the working of all kinds of public institutions; and criticism of the working of responsible persons. Both these kinds of criticism, in a country of private enterprise, would be damaging to the firms concerned, also to the authority of employers over workers, and are therefore taboo.

In discussing the wall-newspaper in the factory, at an earlier stage, we raised the question of control and

editorship. And we saw that the editor of the wall-newspaper was appointed by the trade union committee elected by, and responsible to, the workers. How are the national newspapers controlled?

There is no difference in principle between the control of the wall-newspaper in the factory, which is the organ of the trade union in that factory, and the control of *Izvestia*, *Pravda*, or *Trud*, the three main newspapers of the U.S.S.R. For in the Soviet Union all the Press is in the hands of the organisations of the working people, from their factory trade union committee on the one hand, to their national Trade Union General Council, their Government, and the Central Committee of their Party on the other. In the factory, the editor of the wall-newspaper is appointed by and responsible to the trade union in that factory. On an All-Union scale, the editor of *Trud*, the central organ of the Soviet trade unions, is appointed by and responsible to the General Council of the Trade Unions. The Moscow evening paper is edited by a person appointed by and responsible to the Moscow Soviet. The All-Union Government newspaper, *Izvestia*, is edited by someone who is appointed by and responsible to the Government of the U.S.S.R. *Pravda*, the newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., is edited by someone appointed by and responsible to the Central Committee of the Party.

In addition to the myriads of publications of the trade unions, the local Soviets and the All-Union Government, together with the various State departments and the Party, there are a number of further publications—weekly and monthly magazines—which are issued by the State Publishing House, and children's periodicals, issued by the Children's Publishing House.

There is a vast variety of publications, published by different organisations. But all these organisations have one feature in common—they are organisations responsible to the people, and not private firms owned by well-to-do individuals and working for profit.

It is only when the nature of the control of the Soviet Press is understood that we see that there is an absolutely fundamental difference between the "freedom of the Press" which is guaranteed in the Soviet Constitutions—and always has been—and the "freedom of the Press" which exists in Britain at the present time. If we look at the circulation of newspapers in Britain to-day, we find that an overwhelming majority of the daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers and magazines are private property, run for profit, and owned by those who are sufficiently wealthy to own newspapers. The *Daily Herald*, incidentally, in which a majority of the shares is owned by a joint-stock company, must be included in this category. In contrast with this there stand out the *Daily Worker*, the publication of the Communist Party, and *Reynolds's Newspaper*, published by the Co-operative Movement, as the only national newspapers in the country which can even profess to represent working-class organisations. And yet 75 per cent of the people of Britain are wage-earners. Then there are the various smaller weeklies and monthlies, among which the trade union and co-operative journals amount to a small proportion of the total. And, if we look at any bookstall in any railway station, or go into any newsagent's, we again find that the overwhelming majority of the publications for sale are those, not of organisations of the working people, who are 75 per cent of the population, but of the small minority, amounting to about

1 per cent of the population of Britain, who in effect own the Press of the country.

It is absolutely true, of course, that in Britain, as compared with a Fascist country, working-class organisations have the right to publish their own newspapers and magazines, on condition that they have the necessary funds to do so. To this extent they are better off than they would be under Fascism. But a glance at the average bookstall, or at a list of the newspapers published in this country to-day, is sufficient to show that the freedom of the Press that actually does exist to-day operates in favour of the owners of property and against the organisations of the majority of the population, the wage-earners.

In Soviet Russia, "in the interests of effective freedom of expression for the working people," the Press was transferred from private hands to the organisations of the workers, peasants, and soldiers. We have surveyed the results of this transfer of the ownership of the Press. And we have seen that the working citizen of the U.S.S.R. enjoys an effective freedom of expression, in two ways, which is not enjoyed by him in other countries. First, the material in the newspapers is what he writes, and not what a privileged few write for his consumption. Secondly, what he writes is effective in the sense that it leads to concrete action being taken against abuses, bad practices, inefficiency, and injustice. Compared with other countries, freedom of expression for the Soviet working citizen is a doubly effective weapon, a two-edged sword against all those who, through malice or laziness, negligence or simple inefficiency, obstruct the rapid raising of the general material and cultural level of the people. The Soviet Press can truly claim to be democratic.

Certain readers may, at this point, interject with the words: "Ah, but is this democratic, so long as there is no opposition Press in the U.S.S.R.?" The answer to this is another question: "What is 'opposition'?" If, by opposition, you mean the public exposure of every kind of injustice, abuse, and inefficiency, and of individuals who fail to fulfil their duties, then we see that such criticism exists in the Soviet Press to an extent unequalled anywhere else in the world. But if, on the other hand, you mean the right to express in a Soviet newspaper anti-Soviet ideas, or in a Soviet trade union newspaper anti-trade union views, then such opposition is not allowed by the editors of the Press of the U.S.S.R. But such "opposition" is not allowed in the official organs of any democratic body anywhere. No newspaper which is the organ of a particular social organisation is going to be allowed by its owners to pursue a policy contrary to the interests of the organisation that runs it; just as no privately owned paper can go contrary to the will of its proprietor. The Press lord will not allow his paper to oppose his policy, and the trade union journal in Britain will voice the views of the organisation that publishes it, not oppose them. To ask that the Soviet Press should oppose the policy of the Soviets is to ask something that is never asked anywhere, of any newspaper, whether privately or democratically owned. It is the absurd request to oppose the policy of its owners instead of expressing that policy. The only serious question is: Who, in the U.S.S.R., are the owners? And the answer is: The people of the U.S.S.R. themselves, through their own organisations.

CHAPTER VII

JUSTICE AMONG COMRADES

IT IS FREQUENTLY SAID that a system of society can be judged by the way in which it looks after its children. The Soviet Union passes an examination on this matter with high honours. But it would probably be just as true to say that a social system can be judged by the way in which it treats its criminals, those who offend against its laws.

A visitor to a Soviet court of law, accustomed to the courts of Britain, receives a general impression of informality. Such a room and such a gathering might be a trade union meeting, or just a small public lecture, to judge by the appearance of the people sitting in the body of the hall and on the platform. At one end of the room, on a raised dais, sit three people. The hall is fairly crowded. A discussion is going on between one of the people on the platform and someone on the floor. It appears to be a heated argument. The person on the platform is one of the judges; the speaker from the floor is a criminal facing judgment!

The informality, the heated discussion between criminal and judge, the essentially human atmosphere of the whole proceedings—these are characteristic of working-class meetings all over the world. And the Soviet court is, in fact, a working-class meeting for a particular purpose—the passing of judgment on a comrade who has committed an offence.

The fact that the administration of justice has become one of the ordinary activities of the working people in the Soviet Union has led to the breaking down of the barriers between what we may call "formal" justice on the one hand, and informal justice on the other. I remember one night in Moscow returning home about ten o'clock and finding an enormous gathering on the staircase, with people arguing in loud voices. "What is it?" I asked. "A comradely court," was the reply. "What has happened?" was my next rather obvious question. And I was at once told the whole story by a woman neighbour who seemed just as interested in relating the whole scandalous affair to me as she was in listening to the proceedings themselves.

The man in the flat below had assaulted a neighbour when drunk. The neighbour had complained to the house committee. There were witnesses. The house committee decided to hold a "comradely court" to try the case, and here on the stairs, at 10 p.m., the case was being tried. The judge was a member of the house committee; the jury was made up of the other inhabitants of the block of flats. The accused was proved guilty. The sentence was a public reprimand in front of all the neighbours. And at that the matter ended.

Is such a method of dealing with petty acts of assault, of negligence at work, of drunkenness, effective? Soviet experience shows that, in many cases which might take a person to the courts in Britain, such a comradely court, with a public reprimand, is quite an effective deterrent. If, however, the comradely court comes to the decision that a misdemeanour has been committed which merits more than a public reprimand, then it turns the case over to the People's Court, the

lowest rung in the ladder of "formal" justice in the U.S.S.R.

The People's Court would correspond to the magistrate's court in Britain. Hitherto, until the new Constitution of 1936, the judges were appointed from a panel submitted by the trade unions of the locality. Each judge then had a short legal training, lasting about six months, before taking up his position. Now, under the new Constitution, the judges will be elected by universal secret ballot, nominations being made by the trade unions, the Party, and other organisations of the working people. Together with the judge there sit two assistant judges, without any legal training, also appointed from panels drawn up by the trade unions in the district under the old system. They now will also be elected directly by the population.

The hearing of cases takes place in an atmosphere of the greatest informality. Criminal cases may alternate with applications for alimony against fathers who refuse to recognise their paternity, or, having recognised it, refuse to meet the financial obligations which follow. In every case the accused and the judges carry on lively back-chat, as there is no such "crime" as contempt of court. I remember a case where a young man was up on a charge of drunkenness. Late at night he had apparently demanded money while drunk from a passer-by. The judge, a woman, summed up the case with a reference to the "campaign against hooliganism," and referred to the disgraceful behaviour of the young man in creating a disturbance in the middle of the night. The young man interjected: "It wasn't the middle of the night; it was only twelve o'clock!" "Yes, it was the middle of the night," said the judge, and continued with her homily on the fight

against hooliganism. The young man was sentenced to several months " forced labour."

Sentences in Soviet courts are usually to terms of " forced labour " or to imprisonment. Forced labour, terrifying as it may sound, is the lighter sentence, and in fact is the imposition of a fine, on the instalment system. The person who is sentenced to forced labour continues to work at his job, but every month there is a deduction from his pay which goes to the local authority. At the same time the fact that he is serving a term of forced labour is made known to the employing authority and to his trade union, and the latter is expected to pay special attention to that person, to see that he improves his ways and becomes a more satisfactory and conscientious citizen. The criminal, serving his sentence of forced labour, will not be immune from comment in the wall-newspaper of his place of work and general social disapproval, as well as exhortation to better work and citizenship in the future.

In more serious cases, the People's Court imposes sentences of imprisonment. But here too, as compared with the significance of that term in Britain, Soviet imprisonment stands out as an almost enjoyable experience. For the essence of Soviet imprisonment is isolation from the rest of the community, together with other persons similarly isolated, with the possibility to do useful work at the place of isolation, to earn a wage for this work, and to participate in running the isolation settlement or " prison " in the same way as the children participate in running their school, or the workers their factory. The essential difference between Soviet imprisonment and freedom lies in: (*a*) The fact that the prisoners are bound to live where they are sent; (*b*) The fact that they get

considerably lower wages than when free. Both these features are a sufficient deterrent to the ordinary citizen, but they make prison life comfortable as compared to the conditions normally prevailing elsewhere.

Soviet penal settlements are now usually situated in places where large-scale construction work is in progress. The Baltic–White Sea Canal was built to a great extent by penal labour, and the building of the Moscow–Volga canal is being undertaken in a similar way. An essential feature of such large construction enterprises is that they provide work for people of all specialities. Therefore it is unusual, when serving a sentence in the U.S.S.R., for people not to be able to practise their own speciality. And since, on such construction jobs, as on construction jobs all over the U.S.S.R., there is a continual need for skilled personnel, the unskilled prisoner may learn a trade during his sentence, and be finally released with considerably higher qualifications than he had when arrested !

Within the penal settlements themselves the prisoners earn wages according to their work. But these wages are considerably below trade union rates. Those who, in recent years, have been disappointed to find a change made in this direction (for at one time trade union rates were paid to all those serving sentences) must realise that in the U.S.S.R. since 1931 there has been no unemployment. Until that year, so long as there were workers out of work, it was correctly held that if prisoners of any kind did any form of work, this would be keeping other workers out of jobs, unless the prisoners received trade union conditions. This argument, incidentally, applies also to Britain to-day. It is often stated that prisoners in His Majesty's prisons

" only sew mailbags " as proof that their prison labour is not keeping others out of employment. But if they did not sew these mailbags gratis, then unemployed workers would be employed sewing them for a living, so that in Britain to-day the existing system of prison labour, and any system other than one in which prisoners receive trade union conditions, does contribute towards unemployment. This was also true in the U.S.S.R. till 1931, and till then the prisoners received trade union wages. To-day it is no longer the case, and therefore, though paid, they do not receive as good pay as if they were free.

The extent of self-government in the Soviet penal settlement is very considerable. The wall-newspaper is a means of expression for those serving time, just as it is a means of expression for those at liberty. Amateur social activities are carried on in various spheres, and the good workers receive rapid promotion to jobs of responsibility. The accountant who has embezzled funds while at liberty may become accountant to the penal settlement if he works well, and the leader of a gang of thieves may become the leader of a brigade of workers on a construction job.

The settlement near Moscow—Bolshevo—has received fame throughout the world. This settlement was started for the homeless children who, after the war which was forced on the Soviets from 1918 to 1922, and on which Britain spent £100,000,000, were wandering about the country living by crime. At Bolshevo they were encouraged to govern themselves in a commune, with their own elected committee of management. They built factories and learnt a trade. To-day, long after the sentences of the original inhabitants are completed, many of them remain living

in the village of Bolshevo, working in its factories, and assisting new arrivals to become useful citizens also. The head of the commune is one of the original homeless children.

If we are to make a comparison between the Soviet penal system and any other aspect of Soviet life, we must consider it as a form of education. The régime in the Soviet school, giving the maximum incentive to the child to develop its sense of citizenship, is copied in the treatment of criminals, to give them, too, the greatest sense of social responsibility through the experience of constructive labour and the democratic running of their own affairs.

And, just as in the factory Socialist competition is combined with the material incentive of wages, so, too, in the penal settlement there is Socialist competition; the prisoners are paid, and the best workers are given reductions in their sentences which usually amount to the lopping of one-third off their time if they work well. In this way, if we can call Soviet education "education for citizenship," then the Soviet penal system can only be termed "re-education for citizenship."

A word must be said, in conclusion, of that side of the Soviet penal system which gets so much dark publicity in the world Press, that aspect of it which concerns the treatment, not of comrades who have gone wrong, but of those who act in a way which shows deliberate hostility to Soviet society. For there are individuals even to-day who are ready to take violent measures, and to co-operate with foreign Powers to overthrow the existing Soviet system.

There are many sympathisers of the Soviet régime who cannot understand how, twenty years after the Russian Revolution, there can really be enemies of the

régime in the U.S.S.R. to-day. I think these people forget that open armed warfare against the Soviets was only finally defeated in 1922. Since then more than one attempt has been made to provoke cause for a new attack. And at the present time the avowed policy of the leading Fascist States is to launch an attack on the Soviet Union.

In preparation for that war Hitler is not going to refrain from attempting to inject agents into the U.S.S.R., just as he is injecting them into other countries. If he finds it to his advantage to have agents in Spain and France, in North and South America, he will find it more necessary, not less so, to place them also in the U.S.S.R., the country an attack against which he has openly stated to be his main objective.

And, when we consider the internal position of the U.S.S.R. itself, it would be wildly Utopian to assume that to-day there are not still some persons who, for some reason or other, may have some grudge against the Soviet Government, and want to overthrow it. If these circumstances are recognised, then we see that there are definite reasons why the discovery of anti-Soviet plots in co-operation with Fascist States is likely to take place in the U.S.S.R. in the future just as it has occurred in the past.

Whereas, among comrades, justice in the U.S.S.R. is administered as a means of re-education for citizenship, the Soviet State treats those crimes which are in fact acts of war by the law of war. In the U.S.S.R. to-day the side of the system of justice which represents the future is the justice among comrades which has been described in detail. The law of war, applied to political enemies of the system—spies, saboteurs, and terrorists—will only continue so long as there are States

in the world interested in fomenting war against the U.S.S.R. and in stirring up internal difficulties.

In the great Moscow trials which have taken place in 1936 and 1937 considerable confusion has been caused by the suggestion that these trials showed the undemocratic nature of the Soviet system. " If men like Radek and Zinoviev have to resort to armed terror," it is said, " this can only be because they had no other means of expressing their views." That statement, in essence, is true. But there are two possible reasons for this situation. First, it might be that the State authorities allowed no criticism or discussion whatever, and simply prevented the men concerned from expressing legitimate criticisms of policy. Secondly, it might be that these individuals had already, time and again, expressed their views until the whole of the democratic institutions of the country had finally decided by a vast majority that the propagation of such views was not in accordance with the interests of the community. In the latter case, the fact that these people could no longer speak their views would be because the people no longer wanted to hear them. In which case this fact illustrates, not the undemocratic, but the democratic character of such a prohibition.

So long as the threat of war hangs over the U.S.S.R. the laws of war will be enforced in those cases where, objectively speaking, citizens are in collaboration with the avowed enemies of the Soviet State. It is in these spheres that we may still find the death-penalty—" the highest measure of social defence "—being imposed on " enemies of the Republic." At the same time, however, comradely justice, for the re-education of erring citizens, is applied to the overwhelming majority of cases tried in the Soviet courts.

Comradely justice, and the law of war, are applied side by side and simultaneously in the U.S.S.R. to-day. They must on no account be confused, for they represent two opposing tendencies—the struggle for security necessitated by the existing world situation, and the ordinary means operated by friends to regulate their relationships to the mutual interest of all. The law of war must still be applied in the U.S.S.R. to-day because of the external forces, identifying themselves with the mediæval past, which threaten the security of the Soviets. The other—the law of comrades, the law of future human society—is being applied more and more as an everyday activity of the working people themselves, for the purpose of preserving law and order for their own mutual benefit.

CHAPTER VIII

IS WOMAN'S PLACE IN THE HOME?

"KIRCHE, KÜCHE, UND KINDER"—"Church, Kitchen, and Children"—so runs a German saying which has received great official popularity since the coming of Hitler to power in 1933. These are the three spheres of social life to which women are allotted in the Third Reich. And in the English language, too, there is the old saying, "Woman's place is in the home," which still finds currency in many quarters, particularly so long as the country is racked by unemployment, and able-bodied men are out of work or in constant fear of being so. In the Russian language there are a host of old proverbs degrading woman to the level of something subhuman, and it is therefore all the more striking that in the U.S.S.R. to-day there is no occupation and no position which women may not occupy on the basis of complete equality with men.

In the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. adopted in 1936 it is written: "Women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all fields of economic, State, cultural, social, and political life.

"The realisation of these rights of women is ensured by affording women equally with men the right to work, payment for work, rest, social insurance and education. State protection of the interests of mother

and child, granting pregnancy leave with pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries, and kindergartens."

As a teacher in a Soviet university I have had some opportunity of observing this equality of the sexes at first hand. As a graduate of Cambridge, I could make comparisons between the complete equality in the Soviet university lecture-room and the procedure in Cambridge by which, whenever the women students enter a room, it is the convention for the men to stamp, as if something out of the ordinary was occurring. At least, that was the convention eight years ago. I presume it still is, as things move slowly in our older universities. I also had the opportunity of seeing the amusement of Soviet women students, when I said that their counterpart in England would probably accept a job until marriage, and then retire from such employment. The idea that a job was an alternative to marriage was looked upon as some sort of archaic survival by these young Soviet women, who considered it absolutely practicable to have a career, a husband, and a family into the bargain.

Among the students themselves, on the teaching staff, and throughout the Soviet organisations that I have visited during the past five years, I have hardly ever seen or heard anything which suggests that woman is considered either an inferior or weaker sex. In one case, on the construction of the Moscow underground, when a certain job was made available only to the male workers for reasons of health, a group of young women insisted that they should also do the work, formed a woman's brigade, and competed with the men for the best results. If, at any time or in any place in the U.S.S.R. to-day, it is suggested

that any job is not suitable for women, that is all that is necessary to ensure that within a short time women will be proving that such a job can be done by them as efficiently as by men, and that's that.

I think we in Britain find it hard to realise the extent to which the idea of woman as a "weaker sex" is a product of industrial capitalism. In any country of the world where there is a large peasant population, whatever may be said of the social inferiority of women, the term "weaker sex" is unknown, because it is so patently untrue. We in Britain tend to assume that the physical inferiority of women in our own country to-day is considerably greater than it actually is. And, where such physical inferiority does exist, we are inclined to neglect the degree to which this is due to social causes. It is unlikely that the women of feudal Britain were any weaker physically than the men; and it seems to be to a great extent the responsibility of capitalist industrialism that their physique has deteriorated. A comparison of the physique of British townswomen to-day with that of peasant women in all countries bears this out.

Capitalist industrialism has made labour such a strain on the physique that on the one hand women have had to be excluded from many occupations because of their function as mothers. Socialist industry, by organising all occupations in such a way as to develop the health and strength of the workers, makes it no longer necessary, except in rare cases, to exclude women from occupations on the grounds of health. In this way jobs which definitely develop the physique of the worker are available to women as well as to men in the U.S.S.R. In Britain, the woman's "inferiority" is now used as a reason for exclusion, even where

health conditions are adequate to permit of women's work.

But, on the other hand, capitalism has reduced women to the position of a cheap reserve of labour by means of low wages. In this way the employment of women has been increasingly concentrated on the worst paid jobs, which are often the most unhealthy and the most degrading. This, too, has caused a deterioration in women's physique as compared with that of men.

Finally, by combining household drudgery with every other occupation that a woman might undertake, capitalism has added one further burden to its womenfolk, with disastrous effects on the physique of the women as compared with the men. As a result of these factors, the term "weaker sex" is not a misnomer in Britain to-day, though it must have been as unreal in the Britain of two hundred years ago as it is to-day in every country of the world where there is a large peasant population and where women do a more than full share in the general physical labour of the community. It is the aim of a Socialist country to preserve this physical equality, and to prevent the deterioration of women into the position of a "weaker sex." At the same time, however, real equality demands that woman should be relieved of all the extra burdens imposed upon her in more primitive societies. This means that while, economically, she must receive equal pay and equal opportunities with man, she must be specially cared for socially in so far as she has additional social functions to perform.

Economic equality between women and men must be provided in two main ways. First, equality of opportunity and of wages must be provided. Secondly, women must be equally able with men to have a career. But

this means that they must be relieved of certain burdens which they have to bear in capitalist countries, such as housework and the care of children. And, since only women can fulfil the function of bearing children, and since this necessitates an interruption of every woman's work, special provision must be made for women in this respect. Once children have been born, it is essential to ensure that any economic burden connected with the upbringing of such children shall be as far as possible equally shared by the two parents.

In order to make equality of opportunity effective in the U.S.S.R., a great deal has already been done to provide socially those services which, in other countries, women must perform themselves as their regular household duties. Most important is the matter of feeding, and in the U.S.S.R. to-day a vast network of restaurants makes it possible for the people to feed at or near their places of work, and the communal kitchen replaces the work of the housewife.

But, in addition to cooking meals, the housewife under capitalism spends endless time on the care of her children. In this respect the Soviet Union has provided various means of relief. By a vast development of nurseries and kindergartens, by providing playgrounds for children in every public square or park, by providing out-of-school activities for children in the school buildings and children's rooms in blocks of flats, the Soviet authorities have already to a great extent removed the burden of the care of children from the shoulders of the mothers. Recently, returning to London from Moscow, I was impressed by the number of dirty children playing in the streets, and by the number of infants seen in the care of children just a few years older than themselves. These sights are symptoms

of the utter failure of the British community to cope with the problems of the working-class mother. Such problems in the U.S.S.R. are already solved in principle, and the detailed solution is being further worked out in practice from year to year.

It is sometimes suggested that the vast development of nurseries and kindergartens is likely to break down family affections. Such a view, in my experience, is absolutely unjustified. Is a working mother going to be less affectionate towards her child if she can have it fed and washed in a well-run nursery while she is occupied on other things? Is she going to love her child less if she has it with her only during those hours when she is free from other activities? It is an ironic fact, but well worthy of mention, that those who are most insistent in this country on the joys of family life are usually those who, owing to their fortunate economic position, can afford to pay trained nurses to look after their children for twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four, and who, during the remaining hour, are able to enjoy to the full the blessing of parentage without its labour!

While it is possible for society to relieve women of housework, and of the burden of the care of children, it is physically impossible to relieve women of the function of bearing children. Therefore, in this respect, equality of the sexes necessitates special privileges for the women. In the U.S.S.R. to-day the woman who is having a child is relieved from work on full pay for a period of four months. If the doctor considers it advisable, she may be put on lighter work, or completely relieved of work, without reduction of pay, at any time during pregnancy. The nursing mother, after returning to work, is allowed a special reduction in her working

day. All medical attention and a layette for the child are provided free of charge.

The question of family relations arises in a particularly acute form in the case of responsibility for children. Right from the early years of the Revolution the State put an end to all distinction between the married and the unmarried mother. In this way the age-long distinction between ethical standards for men and for women was brought to an end. Also, no child started out in life with the social stigma of illegitimacy.

The Soviet State took further steps to ensure that marriage should be a voluntary contract, and the family a voluntary social unit. Whereas a marriage and a family based on mutual love and respect has always been encouraged in the U.S.S.R., the holding of people unwillingly together, by force of law or by economic compulsion, has always been opposed. Divorce has been made easy, subject to one condition—that there is equal parental responsibility for the upbringing of every child. Whether marriage is registered or not, according to Soviet law every parent has an economic responsibility for his or her children. As a rule it is the mother who brings up a child if parents are living separately, and therefore, as a rule, it is the father who is bound to meet his responsibilities financially. And these responsibilities are not small. For, to ensure that a Soviet woman shall not have to bear the economic burden of bringing up children alone, every father, if not living with the mother of his children, must pay to her 30 per cent of his earnings for one, 40 per cent for two, and 50 per cent for three children or more until they are of working age. In this way real economic equality of the sexes is established with regard to parental responsibility, while, at the same time, people

are not forced to live together if they have no longer any further natural affection for one another.

A matter which has raised considerable doubts in the minds of many protagonists of sex-equality in this country is the law, passed in 1936, making abortion illegal except in cases where it is justified by consideration for a woman's health or the danger of hereditary disease. This change in the law has been treated as an attack on sex-equality.

It is of the greatest importance, in this connection, to refer back to the text of the original law which legalised abortion in Soviet Russia in 1921. It is important to note that in this law not a word was said about sex-equality, and the right to have an abortion was never put forward as a fundamental right of the Soviet woman. On the contrary, abortion was treated as a social evil, but an evil which was likely to be less harmful when practised legally than when carried out under conditions of secrecy. Here is part of the text of the original law permitting abortion:

"During the past decades the number of women resorting to artificial discontinuation of pregnancy has grown both in the West and in this country. The legislation of all countries combats this evil by punishing the woman who chooses to have an abortion and the doctor who performs it. Without leading to favourable results, this method of combating abortion has driven the operation underground and made the woman a victim of mercenary and often ignorant quacks who make a profession of secret operations. As a result, up to 50 per cent of such women are infected in the course of the operation, and up to 4 per cent of them die.

"The Workers' and Peasants' Government is conscious

of this serious evil to the community. It combats this evil by propaganda against abortions among working women. By working for Socialism, and by introducing the protection of maternity and infancy on an extensive scale, it feels assured of achieving the gradual disappearance of this evil. But as moral survivals of the past and the difficult economic conditions of the present still compel many women to resort to this operation . . ." it is allowed in State hospitals.

The essential feature of this law is that it was based on "difficult economic conditions," and was of a temporary nature. The right to abortion was never introduced as one of the rights of Soviet women, to be enjoyed in all circumstances. It was considered an "evil," and was introduced as a makeshift to combat the serious mortality rate from illegal abortions carried out under unsatisfactory conditions. There is evidence that, at the present time, owing to the increased knowledge of contraceptives on the one hand and the growing sense of economic security on the other, women will not now practise abortion in this way, and that therefore the permissive law is no longer necessary in the interests of health. Abortion in Soviet legislation has always been regarded primarily as a question of health, not of equality. Since thousands of women have been neglecting the use of contraceptives because they could obtain an abortion, the legality of the less satisfactory method of discontinuing pregnancy has actually to some extent prevented more satisfactory methods from being used of avoiding pregnancy altogether.

A fact that must be fully realised in this connection is that the whole formulation of sex-equality in the U.S.S.R. has always tended to be different from its formulation among feminists in capitalist countries.

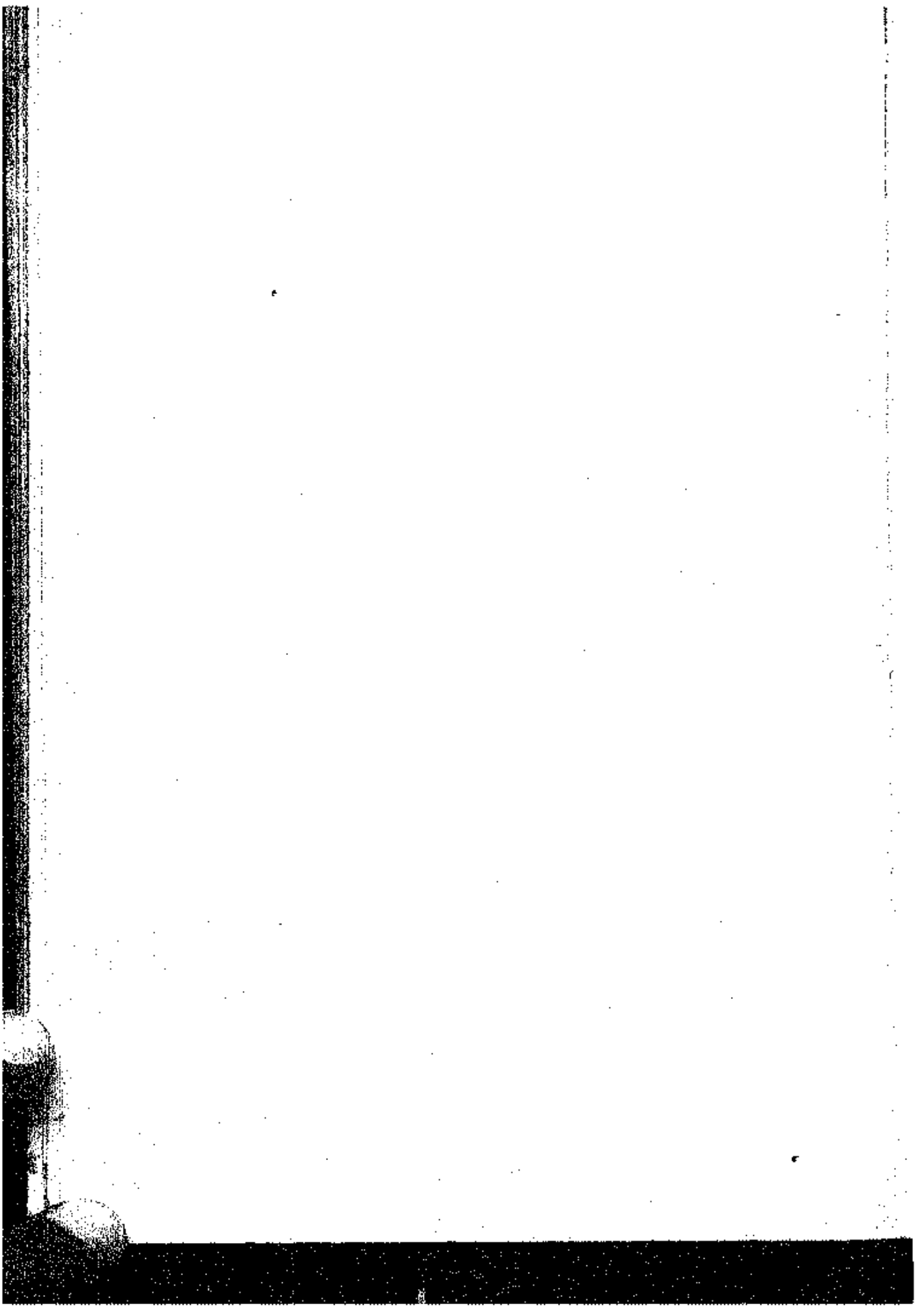
The stress in the U.S.S.R. has always been: Equal economic and social rights and opportunities, with special privileges to compensate for any burden arising from the bearing of children. On the other hand, in countries such as Britain, where years of unemployment have given rise to all sorts of theories of "over-population," the emphasis is usually placed on the right of women not to have children as an essential aspect of sex-equality. In the U.S.S.R., where there is no illegitimacy and where unemployment was finally wiped out in 1931 and shows no signs of ever again recurring, "over-population" is an impossibility, since the whole of the economic planning of the country is based on the number of workers available, and the more workers there are the better for the welfare of all. In such a community there is no social reason for artificially limiting population. Therefore the formulation of sex-equality will have a different emphasis: instead of pressing the right of women not to have children because men do not have to bear children, the whole emphasis will be on providing such conditions that every woman may bear as many children as is consistent with her health without at the same time suffering any greater economic or social burden than men as a result. This is the emphasis given in Soviet society to this matter, and is, I think, the likely formulation for every progressive Socialist community once unemployment has been finally abolished.

In the U.S.S.R., then, the woman's place is not in the home. But this does not mean a disrespect either for maternity or for the family, so long as the latter is in no way a unit preserved by force and economic compulsion as opposed to the free will of the parties to a marriage. By giving equal opportunities to workers of

both sexes, by making social insurance cover all incapacity for work due to pregnancy and childbirth, by ensuring the equal responsibility of both parents for their children whether they are married or not, and, finally, by socialising those services which, under capitalism, have to be performed by the energy of the individual housewife, the Soviet Union has gone a long way towards the freeing of women as citizens from bondage as housewives, wives, and mothers. But this does not mean that the rôle of women as wives and mothers is abolished; it means that wife and husband, mother and father, are equal citizens in every respect, with equal opportunities for a career, with effective equality of rights in every sphere of social, economic, and political life, and with equal moral, social, and economic responsibilities to society, to each other, and to their children.

PART TWO

A NEW STATE



CHAPTER IX

WHAT ARE SOVIETS?

WE HAVE NOW REACHED a point where the fact that a new life is developing in the U.S.S.R. for the vast majority of the people is already established. The Soviet Union is a country where every citizen, irrespective of sex or nationality, has an opportunity to develop his abilities to the full, and, having developed them, to utilise them in the interests of society. Every citizen has an opportunity to participate in the economic, social, and political life of the country, not only as a subordinate, but as a responsible person. Personal initiative in everything that benefits society is encouraged. The trade unions and the co-operatives exist on a scale, and have powers, unknown elsewhere; though in the case of the latter the fact that the community itself bears now the main features of a co-operative commonwealth makes the organisation of co-operative societies as such no longer a matter of principle, but one of expediency. The Press is owned and controlled by the organisations of the people, from the collective farm or factory trade union committee to the Government itself and the General Council of Trade Unions. Women play an equal part with men in economic, social, and political life, and are compensated in so far as they suffer disabilities due to their natural function of bearing children. All these are features of the new life that is growing up in the Soviet Union. And this

new life has grown up within the framework of a new kind of State, without which it could not have developed at all. This is the Soviet State, and, in order fully to understand the new life of the U.S.S.R., we must also understand something about this new State framework within which it has been created.

For the origin of the word "Soviet" in its present-day sense we must go back to the year 1905. Until that time the word "soviet" was used frequently in Russian to denote any kind of "council." A "council of war" or a "council of Ministers" were both "soviets," and there were many other kinds of councils for which this word was used. Early in the year 1905 the workers of the textile town of Ivanovo-Vosnesensk set up a committee to co-ordinate strike action and to force the employers to bargain collectively. This committee consisted of delegates elected by show of hands at general meetings of the workers in the various factories of that town.

As the year 1905 went on, and the workers all over Russia were striking and demonstrating for better conditions, they copied the example of Ivanovo, and set up their own delegate committees or councils in their towns to lead the struggle. These councils came to be known as Soviets of Workers' Delegates. In each case they consisted of elected delegates from the workers in the factories, led the struggle against the employers by organising strikes, and put forward political demands for freedom of speech, the Press, and assembly. They were fighting organisations, led demonstrations, and in certain cases actually seized complete municipal power and passed laws to the disadvantage of the employers in their territory. They became a new form of municipal authority, passing decrees in the exclusive interests of the working people, the majority of the town dwellers.

But the Revolution of 1905 was suppressed. For more than ten years the working-class movement of Russia had no legal opportunity to express itself. Only towards the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917, with the growing disgust at the way in which the Tsarist Government was conducting the war, the workers, peasants, and soldiers, together with many of the employers and even the allied Governments, began to express open opposition to the Government of the Tsar.

In February 1917 the Tsar abdicated and a new Government was set up by the employers. Side by side with this "Provisional Government" the workers of Petrograd once more organised a Soviet, and their example was followed in other cities. So great was the activity of the working-class movement at this time that the Provisional Government was forced to respect the existence of the Soviets and did not dare to try to suppress them.

In 1917, unlike 1905, the setting up of Soviets was not confined to the workers in the towns. In the villages the peasants elected their own councils, or Soviets, through which they demanded the immediate confiscation of the landed estates and their division among the peasantry. And in the army the soldiers in the ranks elected their own committees, in certain cases arrested their officers, and proceeded to govern themselves.

In this way, between February and October 1917, there were set up by the people of Russia—by the workers, peasants, and soldiers—a vast network of elected councils or committees, called Soviets, which led their struggle for better conditions of life.

So powerful were these Soviets that the Government itself was obliged to grant many of their demands. For example, on the very day that the Provisional Govern-

ment came into existence, the Petrograd Soviet issued an order stating that committees of the ranks in the army should be set up everywhere, and that they were to elect representatives to the Soviet. In this way the elected representatives of workers and soldiers combined their political activities. "In all matters of policy," said this order, "the military should submit to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and to their own committees." The Government agreed to this order of the Soviet.

At the end of March 1917 a conference was held in Petrograd, attended by over 400 delegates from local Soviets throughout the country. It was decided that an All-Russian Congress should be called in the near future, and the elected Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, together with ten delegates elected at the conference, was made responsible for the calling of this Congress.

It was as a result of this decision that in June 1917 an All-Russian Congress of Soviets was held, at which there were nearly 800 delegates from Workers' and Soldiers' Soviets all over Russia. The Congress elected an Executive Committee to co-ordinate and lead the work of the Soviets until the next Congress.

Now let us pause a moment and examine what had happened in Russia during this short period of five months. A completely new form of organisation had come into being, covering the whole country and representing the working people, the peasants, and the soldiers—the vast majority of the population.

In its structure this network of Soviets bore a striking resemblance to democratic working-class organisations all over the world. Locally, there were the directly elected Soviets. Nationally, the supreme authority was

a Congress of delegates from all the local Soviets. And, to co-ordinate the work of these Soviets between Congresses, and to carry out its general instructions, the Congress elected an Executive Committee.

The Soviets had developed in a period of a few months into a nation-wide organisation. The structure of this organisation was like that of working-class organisations all over the world. There were local elected committees, which sent delegates to Congresses, and the Congress elected an Executive Committee to lead the organisation between Congresses.

But this Soviet system was broader than the usual working-class organisation in one very important respect. It not only represented the industrial workers: it represented both the industrial workers and the soldiers. And, at the same time, the peasants in the villages were electing their own delegates to Soviets of peasants. In this way the new Soviet organisation embraced practically the whole of the people of the country; only the landlords, employers of labour, high officials of the Government, and people associated with these categories, did not take part in their activity.

Between June 1917, when the first Congress of Soviets met in Petrograd, and October 1917, the Provisional Government of Russia continued to carry on the war. But the people became increasingly opposed to its continuation, and the demand for peace was more and more put forward at the election of delegates to the Soviets.

At the same time the Government was becoming increasingly disturbed at the growing demands of the people, and at the political activity of the workers and peasants. This resulted in a danger that, as soon as it was in a position to do so, the Government might impose a military dictatorship and smash the rapidly

growing democratic organisations of the workers, peasants, and soldiers, including the Soviets.

It was in this situation, when the people of Russia were faced with the imminent suppression of their own organisations and the deprival of that freedom of discussion which the Soviets had given them, that, in October 1917, an armed uprising, led by the Bolsheviks, took place in Petrograd; and, on the following day, at the Second Congress of Soviets, a new Government was set up, responsible to the Soviets themselves.

A few extracts from the resolution of this Congress, setting up the new form of government, may be of interest:

"The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has opened. The enormous majority of the Soviets are represented in it. A number of delegates from the Peasants' Soviets are present at the Congress. . . . The Congress takes power into its hands, relying on the will of the enormous majority of the workers, soldiers, and peasants, supported by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd. . . .

"The Congress decrees: all power throughout the country passes into the hands of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies. . . ."

The new Government consisted of a Council of People's Commissars, a People's Commissar being the head of a State Department. These Commissars were directly responsible to the Congress, and, between Congresses, to the Executive Committee which the Congress elected.

At the Second Congress of Soviets, however, while the workers and soldiers were well represented, there were present only a comparatively small number of

delegates from the Peasants' Soviets, which had their own Executive Committee, and which were preparing for their own separate Congress a week later. At this Congress of Peasants' Soviets, after Lenin had explained the reasons for the seizure of power ten days previously and the decree which had been already adopted on the land question, it was decided that the Peasants' Congress should elect a number of representatives to the Central Executive Committee, and that thus a united Government should be formed representing the workers, peasants, and soldiers. It was this united Executive Committee which now became the supreme authority, and which summoned the Third Congress of Soviets in January 1918 at which there were over 700 delegates, representing workers, peasants, and soldiers from all over Russia.

In a period of a few weeks there had come into being in Russia a new kind of State. In structure this new State corresponded to democratic organisations of working people all over the world. But whereas a trade union represents only the wage-earners in particular occupations, the Soviet State embraced all working citizens, in industry, on the land, and in the army. Only a very small percentage—less than 5 per cent of the Russian population—did not participate in the work of the Soviets.

Sometimes, I think, the reason why certain types of citizen did not participate in the Soviets is misunderstood. And the misunderstanding arises from the fact that the essential nature of the Soviet State, as a State of a new type, is not fully appreciated. When, however, we watch the historical development of the Soviets, it should be quite clear that, as fighting organisations of the working people against the employers, they

naturally excluded the employers from participation in running them; just as trade unions in Britain to-day, as organisations of the workers against the employers, exclude the employers from the right to participate in their affairs. Similarly, in the country, where the Soviets were used by the peasants for confiscating and dividing up the landlords' estates, they were not going to invite the landlords to join with them in the work of these Soviets!

It is as a fighting organisation of the vast majority of the population against the small minority of landlords and employers and their officials that the Soviet State came into being in 1917. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in the Declaration of Rights of the Labouring and Exploited Masses which was adopted at the Third Congress, it is expressly stated that "now, at the decisive moment in the struggle between the workers and their exploiters, there can be no place for the latter on any organ of government." The Soviet State was a democratic organisation of the vast majority of the people, but it deprived the small minority of property-owners of political rights. For the working people, for all but the small minority of employers, together with certain sections of the population closely allied to them, universal suffrage was introduced for men and women alike, at the age of eighteen, irrespective of sex, nationality, or religion. All working citizens, and housewives who made it possible for others to work, had the right to vote, and to stand for election without property or residential qualifications, so long as they had reached eighteen years of age. In this way a degree of democracy for over 95 per cent of the population was introduced, such as they had never previously enjoyed. On the other hand, for less than 5 per cent of the population—those

who lived on unearned incomes—there no longer existed the right to participate in government.

Similarly, with regard to the Press, steps were taken by the Soviet Government which have already been described, and which, from the standpoint of the overwhelming majority of the people of Russia, can only be regarded as democratic. But, from the point of view of the private Press lords, these steps were an outrageous attack on their rights! For, in the Constitution of the Russian Soviet Republic, adopted at the Fifth Congress of Soviets in July 1918, we find "effective liberty of opinion" for the working population being ensured by putting "an end to the dependence of the Press upon capital." Freedom to own the Press passed from the Press lords to the people.

In England, at the beginning of May 1926, just before the General Strike, the workers on the *Daily Mail* refused to print certain articles with which they disagreed. In an official statement from Downing Street this was described as a "gross interference with the freedom of the Press." The men that produced the paper had claimed a say in what they printed! The Soviet Government, early in 1918, went far further than the workers on the *Daily Mail*. It confiscated all the privately owned printing presses and transferred them in their entirety to the organisations of the workers, peasants, and soldiers. From the point of view of the private owners of newspapers, the young Soviet Government was guilty of the most outrageous interference with the freedom of the Press.

But look at the same situation from the standpoint, not of the small minority of people in Russia who were rich enough to own newspapers, but of the overwhelming majority of the people who had never before

had at their disposal the columns of the Press! For these people—for practically the whole of the people of Russia—the newspapers became their own, collectively controlled through the Soviets and other organisations. To these people the Soviet Government had given a freedom of the Press such as they had never before dreamt of possessing.

In our Introduction we saw that the Soviet State, from its very inception, combined features both of democracy and dictatorship. We are now in a position to see why it combined these features. It combined them because, as a democratic fighting organisation of the working people—of the overwhelming majority of the people of Russia—it took steps to put an end to the power of the employing class, a small minority. While granting universal suffrage to all citizens, men and women alike, that worked for a living, it deprived of political rights that small minority that lived by employing others. Similarly, in granting the use of the printing presses to the organisations of the overwhelming majority of the people, it withdrew the use of these presses from those who, hitherto, had owned them only because they had been rich enough to do so.

The Soviet State is fundamentally different from other States in the world to-day. It is in essence an organisation of the working people, of the vast majority of the population, in their struggle for better conditions. Many of the steps which it took, democratic when considered from the point of view of the vast majority of the people, were sheer outrages to the owners of property, against whom such measures were taken.

That is why, from 1918 to 1922, the new Soviet State had to fight for its very existence against the combined forces of more than ten foreign Powers.

CHAPTER X

A WORKERS' STATE

THE SOVIETS were built up in Russia over a period of seven months before they seized power and became the new State. Clearly, during such a period, with continuous conflict between the workers and the employers, with periods of advance and periods of temporary defeat for the working people, it was not possible for anyone to sit down and theoretically work out, according to plan, the general form of organisation into which the Soviets were evolving. But, in spite of this fact, we find that the actual form which developed was almost exactly similar to the form of other working-class organisations, in other parts of the world, even at the present time.

The structure of democratic working-class organisations is almost always on the same general lines. Members join branches which elect local committees. On territories which cover a number of branches, either delegate committees, or conferences which elect a co-ordinating committee, are the supreme authority. And, nationally, the supreme authority is usually a congress, with a committee elected at the congress taking its place as the supreme authority between congresses. This form of working-class organisation is universal because it is the most satisfactory form for working-class purposes. By means of delegate

congresses the supreme authority widely represents the rank and file of the members, who give their delegates instructions. By means of a small executive committee elected at the congress the number of permanent officers is reduced to a minimum, so that most of the delegates can return to their regular jobs in their localities. Such a system will be more or less satisfactory according as the delegates really represent those who elect them. The Soviets, from their very origin, made all members of the Soviets subject to recall if they ceased to give their electors satisfaction. In this way the Soviets were more democratic than many democratic organisations of the working people in other countries even at the present time.

For the first months of its existence the new Soviet Government was occupied with passing legislation in the interests of the working people, the vast majority of the population. An immediate decision was passed on the necessity for concluding a "democratic peace, without indemnities or annexations," and an appeal was broadcast to the peoples of the world to do likewise. In January 1918, at the Third Congress of Soviets, the Declaration of Rights already mentioned was adopted. In this declaration "Russia is declared a Republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies. All central and local authority is vested in these Soviets. . . . The Russian Soviet Republic is established on the basis of a free union of free nations, as a federation of national Soviet Republics." And, in order to ensure that this federation should be really voluntary, the Congress leaves "to the workers and peasants of each nationality the right to decide freely, at their own national Congress of Soviets, whether they desire to participate in the federal Government and in

other federal Soviet institutions." When Finland and Armenia declared their independence, this declaration was welcomed by the Congress of Soviets, together with the policy of the Soviet Government of withdrawing Russian troops from Persia.

Another of the first decrees of the Soviet Government was on the nationalisation of the land. The local Soviets were empowered to confiscate the landed estates, and to distribute this land to the peasants according to their needs. A little later, in the towns, all housing accommodation was nationalised, and the town Soviets were given authority to distribute this housing according to the needs of the population. This meant that workers from the most overcrowded quarters were brought to the centre of the town, the houses of the well-to-do were divided into flats, and, while the original owner was allowed one of these flats, the rest were put at the disposal of workers from the worst slums. Similarly, where houses were empty, workers were moved into them from the most overcrowded areas. From that day to this it has been impossible in Soviet territory to see what is such a common sight in Britain—houses standing empty, or partly used, while in basements in the same street whole families are living in one room.

Programmes of universal education, social insurance, and the nationalisation of the banks and large-scale industry were decided on during the first months of Soviet rule. The eight-hour working day was introduced, and paid holidays of at least two weeks annually were granted to all workers.

In the Declaration of Rights the purpose of the Soviet State was described as the "fundamental aim of suppressing all exploitation of man by man, of

abolishing the division of society into classes . . . of bringing about the Socialist organisation of society. . . ." With this end in view, " work useful to the community is made compulsory upon all."

It was not, however, until the Fifth Congress of Soviets, in July 1918, that a Constitution was adopted for the first Soviet Republic. This Constitution was a composite document, including the Declaration of Rights, and adding to it a number of provisions to ensure democracy for the working population at the same time as it deprived the employing class of all political power. The Constitution also included a description of the organisation of the Soviet State.

We have seen how the Press was turned over from private hands to the organisations of the workers, peasants, and soldiers. Similarly, with regard to the meeting-halls, measures were taken to ensure that all premises " suitable for public gatherings, together with lighting, heating, and furniture," should be at the disposal of the working people. It is according to this original law of the Soviet Republic that the administration of the Soviet factory to-day is bound to allow the workers to use the factory buildings as a meeting-place out of working hours, and to allow accommodation there for the trade union offices. At the same time, with regard to freedom of association, the new State " lends to the workers all its material and moral assistance to help them unite and to organise themselves." We have already seen how this attitude to trade unionism led to a phenomenal growth both in trade union membership and in the powers of the trade unions.

Particularly important were the early decrees of the Soviet Government on the question of military service.

In one such decree it was stated that " one of the basic aims of Socialism is to liberate humanity from the burden of militarism and from the barbarism of sanguinary clashes between peoples. The objective of Socialism is general disarmament, perpetual peace, and brotherly co-operation of all the peoples which inhabit the earth." But " in all countries the imperialist bourgeoisie is in power. Its policy is directed towards the suppression of the Communist Revolution and the enslavement of all weak peoples." Therefore the Soviet Republic " must create its own powerful army." But " to arm the bourgeoisie would mean the bringing of continual strife into the army and would therefore paralyse its strength in the struggle against foreign enemies." Therefore " the parasitic and exploiting elements in society, which do not wish to assume equal rights and obligations with others, cannot be permitted to bear arms. The Workers' and Peasants' Government will seek out means to impose on the bourgeoisie in some form part of the burden of the defence of the Republic."

We now come to the description, in the Constitution of 1918, of the structure of the Soviet State. For the first time in history universal suffrage was introduced for every citizen, from the age of eighteen upwards, irrespective of religion, sex, or nationality, and without residential or property qualifications. Every such person could vote at elections, and stand for election. But because, as has already been pointed out, the Soviet State was an organisation of the working population for defending their interests against the property-owners, the latter had no political rights in the Soviet State. Universal suffrage was enjoyed by all who lived by their own labour, those who by performing domestic

duties enabled others to carry on productive work, those working people who through invalidity were unable to work, and those who were in the army or navy defending the Soviet Republic. On the other hand, however, employers and those who lived on unearned income, agents and middlemen, monks and priests, agents of the former police, members of the former royal family, and the mentally deranged, were not allowed the right to participate in elections.

Some surprise may be felt that the priests and monks were deprived of the right to vote and to stand for election. It must be remembered, however, that the Church in Tsarist Russia was the largest single landowner, and when the landed estates were confiscated the priests and monks, together with the other landlords, almost without exception, joined forces with the armed counter-revolution. Religious freedom was guaranteed from the first days of the Revolution, and "freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda" was assured to every citizen by the Constitution. At the same time, however, the Church was disestablished, and deprived of its income from land and industry, and the schools were completely taken over by the State. In this way religion became a private, as opposed to a State, concern; religious groups had now to pay their own priests without any form of State subsidy or unearned income from property.

Universal suffrage was established in 1918 for the vast majority of the population of Russia at a lower age than in any other country. At the same time, for a small minority the right to vote and to stand for election was not permitted. Writing in 1919, Lenin pointed out that this was a temporary measure, in the interest of the working people at a time when every means was

being used by the property-owners, nationally and internationally, to overthrow the Soviet State. Here are his words:

"The Russian Communist Party must explain to the toiling masses, in order to avoid a wrong generalisation from transient historical needs, that the disfranchisement of a section of citizens does not in the Soviet Republic affect, as was the case in the majority of bourgeois-democratic republics, a definite category of citizens disfranchised for life, but applies only to the exploiters, only to those who, in violation of the fundamental laws of the Socialist Soviet Republic, persist in defending their position as exploiters, in preserving capitalist relationships. Consequently, in the Soviet Republic, on the one hand, every day of added strength to Socialism and diminution in the number of those who have objective possibilities of remaining exploiters or of preserving capitalist relationships, automatically reduces the percentage of disfranchised persons. In Russia at the present time this percentage is hardly more than 2 or 3. On the other hand, in the not distant future, the cessation of foreign invasion and the completion of the expropriation of the expropriators may, under certain conditions, create a situation in which the proletarian State power will choose other methods of suppressing the resistance of the exploiters and will introduce universal suffrage *without any restrictions*."

The structure of the Soviet State, as described in the Constitution of 1918, was not evolved by a group of politicians and lawyers sitting in conference and drawing up a Constitution. It was a description of the existing Soviet State as it had come into existence during the preceding year. The local Soviets, as we

have seen, were simply councils of delegates, elected by the workers at their factory meetings, and by the peasants at meetings in the villages. At these meetings the workers and peasants discussed the merits of the various candidates proposed, a d then voted in the simplest and most straightforward way, by show of hands.

So, in the Constitution itself, we find that the basic unit of the Soviet State is the town and village Soviet, directly elected by the whole working population of the age of eighteen and upwards. In the village, on the consent of the local authority, the voting age could be lowered to sixteen.

For areas larger than the town or village, such as counties, provinces, and national territories covering a number of towns and villages, the supreme authority was a Congress of Soviets for that area, to which delegates were sent from all the local Soviets. Such Congresses elected their own Executive Committees, which carried on the work of government between Congresses.

For the Russian Soviet Republic as a whole the supreme authority was an All-Russian Congress of Soviets. According to the Constitution, this "All-Russian Congress of Soviets is composed of representatives of town Soviets, on the basis of one deputy for every 25,000 electors, and representatives of provincial Congresses of Soviets, on the basis of one deputy for every 125,000 inhabitants." At first sight this form of representation gave great over-representation to the town population, but this view is somewhat illusory.

It must be noted that the representation of the towns is stated in terms of the number of electors, of the provinces in terms of inhabitants. Now the electors

were all working citizens over the age of eighteen whereas the number of inhabitants included the non-voters, whether employers of labour or juveniles. Therefore one representative for every 25,000 voters was not very much greater than one for every 125,000 inhabitants.

As against this, however, must be set the fact that in the provincial Congresses the towns as well as the villages of the province were represented. Therefore in the election of the provincial delegates the representatives of the town workers also participated. In this respect there was a certain element of dual representation of the town electors. The citizens of Moscow sent delegates to the All-Russian Congress from the Moscow Soviet. But the Moscow Soviet was also represented at the Moscow Provincial Congress of Soviets. And this Congress also sent delegates to the All-Russian Congress. In this way the representation of the towns was definitely greater, in proportion to population, than the representation of the villages.

How did this inequality of representation arise? The answer is that the detailed structure of the Soviet State developed between February 1917 and the seizure of power in October, and between October 1917 and the adoption of the Constitution in June 1918, not as a result of a conscious and premeditated plan, but as a result of the direct political activity of the people. It has been mentioned already that until after the seizure of power in October 1917 the Peasants' Congress met separately. While the first two Congresses of Soviets, representing the workers and soldiers, were attended by delegates elected in proportion to the number of voters, at the Peasants' Congress the representation happened to be according to village

population. When, after the Second Congress, the peasants joined the workers and soldiers in the Central Executive Committee, the dual system of election was continued.

It also happened that the most active section of the people in building up the Soviets was the working class of the towns. This led to a large representation of the town workers at the early Congresses. Similarly, in the provincial Congresses the workers played an active part. And in this way there evolved the system of dual representation which has been mentioned.

Now it would have been possible, at the Fifth Congress of Soviets, when the Constitution was adopted, to have eliminated the inequality in representation between town and country, but this was not done, and quite consciously. The reason was that the working class of Russia had so far played a leading part in the building up of the Soviets, and it was because of this practical leadership that its representation was large in proportion to its numbers. Was it desirable that the most active section of the community in the new State should be deprived of part of its representation in the name of an abstract "Equality"? Or, alternatively, was it desirable that the class which had shown the initiative in setting up the Soviet State should for the time being continue to enjoy greater representation than the other main class in society, which had proved less active? The Congress decided to preserve the predominance of working-class representation, of that leadership which had given rise to the Soviet State, the leadership of the class which had shown the greatest energy in defending the Soviets against attack.

Three outstanding features of the Soviet elections should here be mentioned. First, all delegates to the

Soviets, to Congresses, and members of Executive Committees were made subject to recall if their electors were dissatisfied with their work. In this way the permanency of every official's post depended on the agreement of his electors. Secondly, every elected delegate to any Soviet body was bound, not only to sit on the Soviet as a committee member, but also to participate in the day-to-day work of the Soviet. In this way every member not only passed laws, but was one of those responsible for carrying them out. There was thus no divorce between legislature and executive, between those who made the laws and those who enforced them.

Thirdly, a word must be said as to the nature of the elections. In the Soviet State, as in working-class organisations in this country to-day, the system of election was based on the desire to return to the organs of government those who were best suited to represent their fellows. At every election meeting a discussion took place on the work of the Soviet authorities, and general instructions were adopted as to the policy to be pursued in the future. Each delegate who was elected was instructed to pursue the policy agreed upon at the meeting. And at intervals he had to report back to the electors on how he was carrying out this policy on the Soviet. Members of the Soviets were delegates with a mandate from their electors, and subject to recall if they did not carry out this mandate to the satisfaction of their supporters. This system stands in sharp contrast to the parliamentary system, where candidates come forward with a cut-and-dried statement of policy, the electors choose the programme which they think they prefer, and the candidate who is returned then proceeds to carry it out or not, as the spirit moves him.

The system of election in the Soviet Union is only comparable with that which prevails in democratic working-class organisations in the capitalist world, with the right of recall making it even more democratic.

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets elected a Central Executive Committee. This Executive Committee was the supreme authority between Congresses. The Executive Committee was responsible for appointing the "Government," or Council of People's Commissars, which consisted of the heads of all the different State departments. The People's Commissars were responsible to the Central Executive Committee for their work. The Council of People's Commissars could meet together and issue decrees, and each Commissar, individually, could issue decrees in his own department. Any such decrees were subject to the approval of the Central Executive Committee.

In this way we see that the structure of the Soviet State combined the elective principle, through the Soviets, with, at the same time, leadership and appointment, through the State departments. The Central Executive Committee was responsible to the Congress; the Congress consisted of delegates from the local Soviets, and these were responsible to the people. On the other hand, the Executive Committee appointed the People's Commissars, who appointed their various departmental officials, who were responsible for appointing the workers in the various State organisations right down to the smallest State factory or workshop. But here again, side by side with the managers appointed from above, and who are ultimately responsible to the Commissar, sit the representatives of the workers, in the person of elected trade union officials. So that throughout the Soviet system there is a most

intricate combination of election and appointment, responsibility to the rank and file and responsibility to a higher authority, the election and recall of representatives by the electors, and the appointment and dismissal of workers by the authorities. Every Soviet organisation is controlled by representatives of the people. The factory manager is responsible to some trust, which is responsible to one of the State Commissariats. The Commissar is responsible to the Central Executive Committee, which, indirectly, is responsible to the electors. The trade union representative is responsible to the workers, who are also electors to the Soviets. It is this complex system of government, combining the maximum of rank-and-file responsibility with the elective principle, and with appointment by higher authorities of lower officials, that is responsible for the status of all Soviet citizens as masters as well as servants, as described in Part I.

It was this new kind of State, too, which inspired Lenin, in reply to Kautsky's accusation that the Soviet Government was undemocratic, enthusiastically to exclaim:

"Is there a single country in the world, even among the most democratic bourgeois countries, in which the *average rank-and-file* worker, the average rank-and-file *village labourer* . . . enjoys anything approaching such *liberty* to hold meetings in the best buildings, such *liberty* to use the best printing works and the largest stocks of paper, to express his ideas and to protect his interests, such liberty to promote men and women of his own class to administer and to 'run' the State as in Soviet Russia?" (*Proletarian Revolution*, p. 31).

CHAPTER XI

DEMOCRATIC DEFENCE—THE RED ARMY

In 1931, when I first went to the U.S.S.R., I had certain pacifist sympathies. It was not encouraging, therefore, to see factory workers sometimes marching through the streets carrying rifles, and to find that military training of some kind was available in practically every Soviet institution. Since then, however, my personal experiences while living in the U.S.S.R., together with certain events that have taken place in the rest of the world, have convinced me that effective democracy is something which must be defended by arms against those who, at the present time, are doing their utmost to smash it by force.

And, once this need to defend the achievements of the Revolution by force against armed intervention is realised, then the extent to which the people of the U.S.S.R. receive military training is to be appreciated as one of the greatest proofs of real democracy. To make a comparison with Britain I would put it this way: In Britain, in the "public schools" where the sons of the well-to-do receive their expensive education, the "Officers' Training Corps" is a voluntary organisation of which practically 100 per cent of the boys are members. In the universities such corps also flourish. But I have yet to find the industrial enterprises in

Britain, where the breadwinners of some 75 per cent of the population earn their living, where there are Officers' Training Corps, so that the people may become skilled in the art of defence. By contrast, it just happens in the U.S.S.R. to be in the factories and in the collective farms, as well as in the universities and scientific institutions, that citizens may receive the elements of military knowledge, and are thus trained to defend themselves against any enemy. In this way the military training which in Britain is confined to a small section of the population is at the disposal of the whole community. Every Soviet citizen has the opportunity to be trained as a military leader.

This relationship between the people of the U.S.S.R. and the army is nothing new. It has existed since the setting up of the Soviet State in 1917. In January 1918 it was declared by the Third Congress of Soviets that " in order to secure the supremacy of the labouring masses, and to guard against any possibility of the exploiters regaining power, the Congress decrees the arming of the workers, the formation of a Socialist Red Army of workers and peasants, and the complete disarmament of the propertied classes." At the same time it was declared " the duty of all citizens to defend the Socialist fatherland " and " the honour of bearing arms in defence of the Revolution is granted only to the workers. The leisured section of the population will fulfil other military duties." In this way the " public school class " of Russia was deprived of the right to participate in defence, because the working people distrusted this class in the defence of the Revolution; while the military training of the people, which in Britain is confined within the walls of the " public schools " and universities, was extended to the whole population.

In the early days of the Revolution the Soviet Government issued a decree for the arming of the whole people. The arsenals of the State were thrown open to the workers and peasants, and the authorities were instructed that the people were to be allowed arms for the defence of the Revolution. When, in 1918, a war broke out which was to last for four years, the exigencies of war taught the same lesson as Spain has learned during 1936. This was that the "armed people" were defenceless against a well-organised trained army unless they, too, achieved first-class organisation and discipline. And a disciplined and well-organised army is impossible without centralised command.

As a result of the necessities of the war itself, the unorganised arming of the people and the defence of the Revolution by badly trained groups of armed workers could not be allowed to continue. The necessary steps were therefore taken by the Soviet Government to build up a regular army, with a centralised command and the enforcement of the necessary discipline, even though this meant the elimination of certain features which were defended by some as being necessary to a democratic army. It must not be imagined that such a reorganisation was easy, for the Revolution itself had been made possible only as a result of the complete breakdown of the old army discipline, the seizure of power by the rank-and-file soldiers and their elected committees, and the replacing of the old army officers by elected commanders. It took time to persuade the rank-and-file soldiers, once the commanders were really drawn from the ranks and there was an equal opportunity for all to rise to the highest positions of command, that a disciplined subordination to the commanders was still essential while in

action, whatever might be the relationship of the men in the ranks to the commanders when off duty.

The experience of Soviet Russia in fighting against the armed intervention of ten foreign Powers was that the arming of the people must be followed at once by the organising of a strong people's army, with a centralised command, and well disciplined. While the old relationship between soldier and officer was completely abandoned, and all ranks mixed together as equals when off duty, the behaviour of every soldier when on duty had to conform to the necessary military discipline. The fact, however, that in the new army which was being built up the commanders themselves were drawn from the best elements in the ranks meant that the old antagonism between officer and soldier, reflecting the class relationships in society, no longer existed. In this way the Red Army was built up, an army which to-day is officered to the extent of some 95 per cent by men drawn from the working class and the collective farm peasantry.

The structure of the Red Army and its administration is in general similar to that of other organisations of the Soviet State. The supreme authority is vested in the Commissar of Defence, who is appointed by the supreme authority of the State. Officers are appointed from above, but at the same time committees of the rank and file play a large part in the management of the barracks and in all matters immediately affecting the welfare of the soldiers, their social and political life, their education, feeding, housing conditions, and so on. In this way the Soviet barracks has its wall-newspaper like the factory, and the commander who does not treat the men with the necessary politeness may be criticised for his uncomradely attitude in the same way

as a factory foreman may be criticised by the rank and file.

Just as, in the factory, there are opportunities for every worker to study and to obtain promotion, so, too, in the Red Army, every facility is available for free study and so for promotion. Any rank-and-file soldier may apply for admission to one of the military academies, and will be accepted as soon as he has the necessary qualifications.

Military service in the U.S.S.R. is an obligation on all citizens. So long, however, as there was an employing class, it was expressly stated that the employing class was not to be given military work for the defence of the country. To-day, however, now that the employers no longer exist as a class of the Soviet population, the new Constitution simply states: "Universal military service is the law. Military service in the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army represents the honourable duty of the citizens of the U.S.S.R."

It has already been shown, when we were considering trade unions in the Soviet State, how the regiments of the Red Army freely mix with the workers and peasants in social and cultural activities of various kinds, as well as giving them active assistance in production in times of emergency. Similarly, when we discussed the setting up of the Soviet State, we saw that the soldiers, like the other citizens, had the full right to vote and to participate in elections. In the army of the U.S.S.R.—and this is a feature of every really democratic army—politics have always played an important part, for the Soviet Government has nothing to hide from its soldiers, and it is to the greatest advantage that they should know for what they are fighting.

In discussing the Soviet factory we saw how the work

of every factory manager included, in addition to responsibility for production, the work of caring for the welfare of the workers employed. So, too, in the Red Army, the duty of the commander, not only to his superior staff but to the men under him, is stressed in the official field regulations which state: "Care for the Red Army man is the first obligation of the commander, and is his direct duty."

An interesting feature of the field regulations of the Red Army is a paragraph which deals with the treatment of prisoners of war. We have already seen how, in general, prisoners in the Soviet Union are treated as deserving of education rather than punishment. However, with regard to deliberate enemies of the State, the law is applied as between enemies and not as between comrades. In preparing the Red Army for action, however, we find the following paragraph in the field regulations: "The troops of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army are generous to prisoners of war, and render them all kind of help for the purpose of preserving their lives." This, at a time when the aeroplanes of Hitler and Mussolini were bombing the defenceless women and children fleeing from Malaga, was one of the field regulations issued by the Soviet Government.

I remember how, when working in Moscow, I happened to see a letter sent to the U.S.S.R. from an English worker. During the period of British intervention he had been sent to the north of Russia, and had been taken prisoner. In his letter he recalled his experiences—how he had been given work to do, was paid for this work, and allowed to spend his free time wandering about the town in the evenings just as he wished. This was no accidental treatment; it was

typical of the treatment of prisoners during the last war against the U.S.S.R.; and, from the field regulations quoted, we see that it will probably be true of the next.

What is the explanation of this leniency, of this friendliness, to the prospective prisoners of the Red Army in a war? The answer is that the leaders of the Red Army look upon it, not simply as a military machine, but as a political organisation capable of winning to its side the workers and peasants, the vast majority of the people, in any territory which it may enter. For this reason the regulations definitely state: "The winning over to the side of the proletarian revolution of the working and peasant masses of the enemy army as well as the population of the field of action is the principal condition for victory."

The Fascists, in their attack on Spain, bomb defenceless women and children who are fleeing from a captured town. The Red Army, when there was a serious dispute with the Chinese in Manchuria a few years ago, entered Manchurian territory. When it entered a town or village the first thing it did was to hand over all stores of food and clothing to the most impoverished of the population, thus endearing itself to the women and children instead of murdering them. Such a policy is consistent only with a democratic army, not interested in the preservation, but with the destruction, of the power of private property. And it is for this reason that in a war against Fascism the Red Army has not only its own morale in its favour, but the opportunity to gain very rapidly the sympathy of all the democratic forces in the country with whose Government it happens to be at war. The Red Army, at a time when the whole world is menaced by ever

more flagrant acts of Fascist aggression, stands out as a bulwark of democracy, as a political as well as a military organisation, rooted in, and recruited from, the rank and file of the people, a people's army which will respect the people of any territory which it may ever have cause to enter.

Such an army, however, representing a people so organised that they have no unemployment—and there are among them no citizens who can gain anything from war—is not likely to enter foreign territory unless absolutely compelled to do so by an act of aggression, either against the Soviet State itself, or against a State with which it has a pact of mutual assistance. In 1917 one of the main slogans of the Congress of Soviets was "Peace." To-day, twenty years later, no citizen of the U.S.S.R. wants war. Therefore we find that Voroshilov, Commissar for Defence of the U.S.S.R., recently made the following public statement:

"We are proud of our army, its organisation, its military training, its splendid equipment, but without hesitation we would send this army back to the factories and the collective farm fields, we would disarm it completely if the capitalist countries would accept our disarmament proposals."

Only the U.S.S.R. could contemplate such demobilisation without fearing unemployment. Only the U.S.S.R. has jobs waiting for every ex-soldier, and only in the U.S.S.R.—a country where not one citizen can gain anything from war—can such a demobilisation be looked upon as highly desirable, if only the security of the country could be guaranteed in other ways.

CHAPTER XII

A UNION OF NATIONS

THE RUSSIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC, in January 1918, was declared "a free union of free nations," a federation of national republics. Every nationality within the territory covered by the Soviets was given the right to decide, at its own Congress of Soviets, the conditions under which it would join this federation. And when certain nations which had previously been part of the former Russian Empire declared their complete independence, this was welcomed by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

But though, from its birth, the Soviet Republic recognised the rights of nations to determine their own fate, the surrounding States did not recognise the right of the Russian people to determine theirs. The result was that the actual seizure of power, which had been almost bloodless, was followed by four years of devastating "civil war," when at least ten foreign armies co-operated in an attempt to suppress the Soviets. Finally, as a result of the united struggle of the Russian people, and the support which they received from the workers of other countries, peace was restored in the West in 1921, and in the Far East in the following year.

During this war the Russian Soviet Government again had an opportunity to state its position in relation

to other nations. For, in 1920, urged on by France, the Polish Government was preparing openly to declare war on the Soviets. At that time the Soviet Government issued a manifesto which was reprinted throughout the world, and was widely circulated in Britain.

Here is an extract from this manifesto: "Your enemies, who are ours, speak falsely when they tell you that the Russian Soviet Government intends to force Communism on the Polish people with the help of the bayonets of the Red Army. Communism is only possible in countries where the vast majority of the working people have the will to secure it by their own initiative. . . . The reorganisation of Poland in accordance with the interests of the Polish masses must be the work of these working masses themselves." The essence of this manifesto was repeated by Stalin in 1936 in his interview with Roy Howard: "Every country will make its own revolution if it wants to, and if it does not there will be no revolution. For example, our country wanted to make a revolution and made it, and now we are building a new, classless society. But to assert that we want to make a revolution in other countries, to interfere in their lives, means saying what is untrue, and what we have never advocated."

These two passages are extremely important, the one from 1920 and the other from 1936. For if the Soviet Government really recognised the right of nations to self-determination, then it essentially had to hold this democratic view of the revolution in other countries.

The restoration of peace in 1921 and 1922 found the territory covered by the Soviets considerably extended. For in the process of the struggle there had been set up additional Soviet Republics in the Ukraine and White Russia, in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. At the

same time, however, the economic position of all these territories was far worse than it had been in 1917, for the retreating armies of intervention had done their utmost to wreck everything which they left behind them. Railways were blown up and factories burnt to the ground. The Soviet Republics were faced with the problem of economic reconstruction at the same time as they knew that at any moment another attack might be launched against them, perhaps by one State, or perhaps by all the members of the League of Nations together; for, in the eyes of its founder, this institution was to act as a "bulwark against Bolshevism."

The experience of the war itself, and the economic problems which it created, brought the different Soviet Republics into the closest contact with each other. Experience showed that still closer union was essential to future security. Therefore, in December 1922, a Treaty of Union was signed between the Soviet Republics; and the U.S.S.R.—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—was in this way brought into being.

In this treaty it was pointed out that the world was now divided into two camps, capitalist and Socialist. "Only in the camp of the Soviets," it goes on, "has it been found possible to root out national persecution, to create conditions of mutual trust, and to lay the foundations of fraternal co-operation. . . .

"But the years of war were not without their heritage. The ruined fields and idle factories, the breakdown of production and the exhaustion of economic resources which follow from the war, render the isolated efforts of the separate Republics towards economic reconstruction inadequate. The revival of the economic life of the country has proved impossible so

long as the Republics lead a divided existence. Furthermore, the unsettled state of international relations, and the danger of new attacks, render imperative the creation of a common front by the Soviet Republics against capitalist encirclement.

"Finally, the very structure of the Soviet power, which is international in its class character, urges the working masses of the Soviet Republics along the path of union into one Socialist family."

According to the Treaty of Union, a central federal Government was to be formed which would control defence and foreign affairs—including the establishment of one form of Soviet citizenship to cover the whole union, and also including the admission of new republics. The Government of the Union would also be responsible for introducing a general economic plan for the whole territory; for regulating trade, currency, and taxation; for deciding on the best methods of utilising the land; and for controlling transport and communications, weights and measures. In addition, the Government of the Union was to lay down the general principles governing such matters as education and health protection.

The Governments of the republics which joined the Union were to have complete self-government on every matter that was not included in the treaty, and every republic had the right to secede from the Union if it wished to do so. On the other hand, however, if a republic passed any law which was contrary to the terms of the treaty, then this law could be annulled by the Government of the Union.

The Treaty of Union was signed in 1922, and ratified by the first All-Union Congress of Soviets, which was elected in the same way as the All-Russian Congress.

Delegates were elected from all the territory now covered by the Union, in the proportion of one to every 25,000 town electors, and one to every 125,000 inhabitants of the provinces. The Congress elected a Central Executive Committee, which started to draw up a Constitution for the Union.

The original conception of the structure of the Union Government was that it should be an almost exact copy of that of the Russian Soviet Republic, but covering all the territory now within the Union. However, it was mainly as a result of the initiative of Stalin personally, himself a Georgian and an expert on the national question, that special features were incorporated in the Constitution of the Union in order to protect the rights of all the national republics from a possible domination by the Russians, who formed an overwhelming majority of the total population of the Union, and who thus would hold a majority of the votes in the Congress of Soviets. The Constitution was adopted in its final form at the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets in 1924.

The supreme authority in the U.S.S.R., as in each republic, was to be the Congress of Soviets. Delegates were to be sent to this Congress elected in the same proportion to population as the delegates to the Russian Congress. But the Central Executive Committee was to be given a special structure, peculiar to its position as Government of a Union of independent and equal national republics. Instead of being, as in the separate republics, a single body elected at the Congress of Soviets, the Central Executive Committee was to be divided into two separate councils, with completely equal powers in every respect. Each could introduce new legislation, but no law could be passed

without being accepted by a majority in each of these councils separately.

How were these councils to be elected?

On the one hand, the Council of the Union was to be elected in precisely the same way as the Central Executive Committee had previously been; that is, by direct election at the Congress of Soviets. The Council of the Union would represent the delegates at the Congress, and, since an absolute majority of these delegates came from the Russian Soviet Republic, the Council of the Union would have a Russian majority. But this Council of the Union could do nothing without the agreement of a majority of the members of the Council of Nationalities.

The Council of Nationalities was to consist of representatives of the different republican Governments appointed in equal numbers. In the Council of Nationalities the Russians would, therefore, be a small minority, quite out-voted by the Ukrainians and the Georgians, the White Russians and the Armenians, together with the Uzbeks and Tadjiks and Turkmenians who had joined the Union later.

The Government of the U.S.S.R. then, was a unique compromise between the representation of the people, as individual voters irrespective of their nationality, and of the nations of the Union, as equal nations. Only in extreme cases was it likely that the two councils would not reach agreement on any particular question; while the scheme gave the smaller nations of the Union, though a minority of the total population, a large say in determining policy.

In case of disagreement, and if no attempt at conciliation proved successful, disputes were to be referred to a Congress of Soviets specially called for the purpose.

However, no occasion has arisen where this was necessary, for the two councils have been able to work in complete harmony.

The problems involved in setting up this multi-national State were difficult ones. In his speech to the Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets, where the new Constitution of 1936 was adopted, Stalin says on this matter: "The Constitution now in operation, adopted in 1924, was the first Constitution of the U.S.S.R. That was a period when the relations between the peoples had not yet been properly adjusted, when survivals of distrust towards the Great Russians had not yet disappeared, and when centrifugal forces still continued to operate. Under these conditions it was necessary to establish fraternal co-operation between the peoples on the basis of economic, political, and military mutual aid by uniting them in a single, federated, multi-national State. The Soviet Government could not but realise the difficulties of this task. It had before it the unsuccessful experiments of multi-national states in bourgeois countries. It had before it the failure of the experiment of the old Austria-Hungary. Nevertheless, it resolved to make the experiment of creating a multi-national State, for it knew that a multi-national State which has arisen on the basis of Socialism is bound to stand every test.

"Since then fourteen years have elapsed, a period long enough to test the experiment. And what do we find? This period has shown beyond doubt that the experiment of forming a multi-national State based on Socialism has been completely successful. This is the undoubted victory of Lenin's national policy.

"How is this victory to be explained?

"By the absence of exploiting classes, which are the

principal organisers of strife between nations; the absence of exploitation, which cultivates mutual distrust and kindles nationalist passions; the fact that power is in the hands of the working class, which is an enemy of all enslavement and the true vehicle of the ideas of internationalism; the actual practice of mutual aid among the peoples in all spheres of economic and social life; and, finally, the flourishing national culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., culture which is national in form and Socialist in content—all these and similar factors have brought about a radical change in the aspect of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; their feeling of mutual distrust has disappeared, a feeling of mutual friendship has developed among them, and thus real fraternal co-operation between the peoples has been established within the system of a single federated State."

And within this great federation, as we have already seen, the treatment of all nations as equals, and of all citizens as equals, irrespective of their nationality, has led to a great growth of national pride. In the U.S.S.R. to-day no citizen, Jew or German, Abyssinian or Italian, Negro or American, Indian or English, is ashamed of his nationality, is privileged because of his nationality, or, because of his nationality or colour, is deprived of any privilege due to him as a working citizen of the U.S.S.R. Such a country can indeed be called a Union of Nations, and many of the peoples of the British Empire will envy a unity based upon such an equality of peoples.

CHAPTER XIII

ELECTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

FOR THOSE WHO WORKED, the young Soviet State gave its citizens the right to vote and to stand for election at an earlier age than in any other country. The representatives that the people elected, if they proved unsatisfactory, were subject to recall by their electors. And, when elected, every representative of the people was bound, not only to participate in the making of decisions, but also in their execution. In addition, so as to draw into the work of administration a vast number of working people—far more than could actually be elected to membership of the Soviets—a system was early evolved by which working men and women, in their spare time, should represent their fellows in the various organs of State administration, national and local, and participate in their work. The result is that, whether we take a local Soviet or the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R., we find in its offices three categories of workers. First, elected members of the Soviet or Executive Committee, who are bound to participate in the work of one of the departments of the public authority to which they have been elected. Secondly, paid employees, appointed by, and responsible to, the elected body. And thirdly, voluntary workers, not bound by any law to do this work, but who have been elected in their trade union meetings

to participate in the work of the Soviets, or of an Executive Committee.

I have, while working in the Soviet Union, participated in an election. I, too, had a right to vote, as I was a working member of the community, and nationality and citizenship are no bar to electoral rights. The procedure was extremely simple. A general meeting of all the workers in our organisation was called by the trade union committee, candidates were discussed, and a vote was taken by show of hands. Anybody present had the right to propose a candidate, and the one who was elected was not personally a member of the Party. In considering the claims of the candidates their past activities were discussed, they themselves had to answer questions as to their qualifications, anybody could express an opinion, for or against them, and the basis of all the discussion was: What justification had the candidates to represent their comrades on the local Soviet?

As far as the elections in the villages were concerned, these took place at open village meetings, all peasants of voting age, other than those who employed labour, having the right to vote and to stand for election. As in the towns, any organisation or individual could put forward candidates, anyone could ask the candidate questions, and anybody could support or oppose the candidature. It is usual for the Communist Party to put forward a candidate, trade unions and other organisations can also do so, and there is nothing to prevent the Party's candidate from not being elected, if he has not sufficient prestige among the voters.

In the towns the "electoral district" has hitherto consisted of a factory, or a group of small factories sufficient to form a constituency. But there was one section of the town population which has always had to

vote geographically, since they did not work together in one organisation. This was the housewives. As a result, the housewives met separately in each district, had their own constituencies, and elected their own representatives to the Soviet. Here, too, vital interest has always been shown in the personality of every candidate. Why should this woman be elected? What right had she to represent her fellow housewives on the local Soviet? In the district next to my own at the last election the housewife who was elected was well known as an organiser of a communal dining-room in the district. This was the kind of person that the housewives wanted to represent them on the Soviet. Another candidate, a Communist, proposed by the local organisation of the Party, was turned down in her favour.

It will be clear from this description that a Soviet election has, up to the present, been a most simple and informal affair, for the purpose of sending forward the best representatives of the people to sit on the local and national organs of government. Organisations and individuals have both been able to put forward candidates, and in cases where the Communist Party has supported candidates they have not always necessarily been members of the Party itself, and, whether they have been members or not, there has never been any guarantee of their election, other than their desirability as candidates to a majority of those present at the meeting. If since November 1917 the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R. has continued to have its members as a majority of the delegates to the Congresses of Soviets, this is purely due to the fact that the Communist Party has put up for election those very people that the electors were likely to respect, and has not as a rule put up people whom the electors were likely to reject.

The election of delegates to the local Soviet is not the only function of voters in the Soviet Union. It is not a question here of various parties presenting candidates to the electorate, each with his own policy to offer. The Soviet electorate has to select a personality from its midst to represent it, and instruct this person in the policy which is to be followed when elected. At a Soviet election meeting, therefore, as much or more time may be spent on discussion of the instructions to the delegate as is spent on discussing the personality of the candidates.

At the last election to the Soviets, in which I personally participated, we must have spent three or four times as much time on the working out of instructions as we did on the selection of our candidate. About three weeks before the election was to take place the trade union secretary in every department of our organisation was told by the committee that it was time to start to prepare our instructions to the delegate. Every worker was asked to make suggestions concerning policy which he felt should be brought to the notice of the new personnel of the Moscow Soviet. As a result, about forty proposals concerning the general government of Moscow were handed in from a group of about twenty people. We then held a meeting in our department at which we discussed the proposals, and adopted some and rejected others. We then handed our list of proposals to a commission, appointed by the trade union committee, and representing all the workers in our organisation. This Commission co-ordinated the proposals received, placed them in order according to the various departments of the Soviet, and this co-ordinated list was read at the election meeting itself, again discussed, and adopted in its final form.

The proposals which were made were of an extremely practical character. For when we set out as citizens to make constructive proposals for our local authority to carry out, the general atmosphere of practicability is very much greater than it can ever possibly be in an election carried out on the basis of party antagonism, where each side will throw exorbitant challenges at the other, hoping to make electoral capital as a result, but having no illusions as to the ultimate practicability of the suggested policy.

To take a concrete example, let us compare the L.C.C. elections of March 1937 with the elections to the Moscow Soviet which took place in 1935, and in which I participated personally. In the former we notice that the Labour Party made great and justifiable play with the increase in housing construction since it came to power. On the other hand, the " moderate " and other candidates tended to centre their anti-Labour propaganda on the so-called " extravagance," not of building so many more houses, but in spending in certain isolated cases of more on individual buildings than was necessary. In this way the issue was put to the electorate as: Labour—More Houses; Anti-Labour—Less Extravagance. The accusation of extravagance might quite well cause people who wanted more houses to vote " anti-Labour," to discover afterwards that the real meaning of less extravagance was to cut down the housing programme to what it had been before Labour was elected ! And, in elections on a party basis, such a false contrasting of issues is bound to arise continuously, to the utter confusion of electors.

But let us return to the election in Moscow. Here we found no spectacular demands for more houses, since the Moscow Soviet was already building increasing

numbers of houses each year. But we did have very strong comments suggesting that the new Soviet should be particularly careful not to build any more large blocks without having a universal store included, that hot water should always be laid on, and that in future the approach to new blocks should be completed together with the houses, instead of having an approach of mud for three months or more after the houses themselves were already inhabited. The question of housing was raised in the Moscow election as well as in the London one, but in the former it took the shape of citizens' definite instructions; in the latter, it was a propaganda weapon which could easily be made a luxurious cloak for a policy that could not command support among the voters at all if it had been fully revealed.

Since, in the U.S.S.R., practically the whole of trade is now controlled by public authorities, a number of instructions dealt with the shops. Those who lived in outlying areas stated the sites where they felt that the Soviet should place shops in the immediate future, and so on. Then there was a question dealing with the manners of the militia ! Several years ago the Moscow Soviet opened a series of enquiry bureaux scattered about the city. Since these were opened several of us had found that the militia, instead of answering enquiries as to where various places were, would always refer the questioner to the nearest enquiry office. We recommended that this be stopped, and I am glad to find that before I left this had been done.

It is not only questions of local importance, however, which are discussed by Soviet citizens. The Central Executive Committee, in considering legislation of major importance, has often called conferences or congresses

of those particularly concerned, for consultative purposes, before such legislation is adopted. Or, in cases where it is considered that the proposed legislation affects the personal interests of the whole population, then it may be submitted to the whole country for consideration.

As an example of the former, we may mention the model statutes for the collective farm, which were adopted in 1935. The Central Executive Committee, two years after the record harvest of 1933 had conclusively proved the effectiveness of collective farming, decided that the time had come when an official model set of statutes for the collective farms should be adopted. It therefore drew up a project, based on the experience of the most successful collectives. It then called a Congress of Collective Farm shock-workers. This meant that the collective farmers were asked to appoint their best shock-workers as delegates, and these elected delegates came to Moscow to discuss the new statutes. Then, after the congress had adopted what it considered the ideal statutes, the Central Executive Committee endorsed these statutes and they became law. In this way a new law was passed only after the fullest consultation with those whom it intimately affected.

Examples of the other procedure, of submitting laws to the whole population for discussion, are more frequent in the case of matters which relate to the personal lives of the population. Thus, between 1917 and 1920 there were conferences and discussions throughout Soviet Russia on the subject of abortion. Finally, in spite of considerable opposition, the law was passed, which has already been quoted, making abortion legal in State clinics. In 1925, when a number of changes were proposed in the marriage law, a

discussion took place for a whole year before the law was altered. And again, in 1936, when the Government considered that the time had come when legal abortion was no longer justified by circumstances, there was a general discussion in factories and collective farms, and in the pages of the Press, before the altered law was finally adopted. Again, in 1936, after the Seventh Congress of Soviets had decided to bring up to date the Constitution of the U.S.S.R., a special committee elected at the Congress drew up the draft, and it was then submitted to the whole population for almost six months' discussion before it was finally amended and ratified at the Eighth Congress. As a result of this discussion, and of the discussion in the Congresses of Soviets in each of the constituent republics, the final draft contained over forty amendments to that which had been originally submitted.

Just as, in the sphere of discussion, the elected authorities of the U.S.S.R. refer to the general public for their opinion, so, too, in the sphere of action, they draw into the administration of the State large numbers of ordinary citizens. The meetings of workers in the factories, and villagers in the country, not only elect their delegates to the Soviets, but also put forward thousands of voluntary workers who are then attached to the different sections of the Soviets. These form the third category mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—workers who voluntarily participate in the various administrative bodies, both local and national. Already, in discussing equality of opportunity, we pointed out how, in this way, many "amateur" administrators find their way into the State apparatus as permanent workers.

The work of every Soviet is divided into departments,

such as health, housing, transport, industry, trade, education, and so on. In each of these sections there is ample scope for voluntary workers, as inspectors of existing conditions, to see that laws are enforced, and to report where improvements should be made and money should be spent. In Moscow alone, hundreds of volunteers do work for the housing department, inspecting dwellings and recommending improvements or demolition; finding suitable building sites; and discovering suitable positions for the creation of open spaces and playgrounds.

Workers for the health department organise campaigns against epidemics, and run meetings and lectures on all subjects of importance to health. Such workers may become professional lecturers if they show ability, thus joining the ever-growing health service of the U.S.S.R. In the case of the education department, section workers become acquainted with the work of the schools, get to know the children personally, and attend the meetings of teachers and of students. By going from school to school they are able to make suggestions for better work, on each occasion describing how the best school in each particular sphere organises its activities. The experience of all such voluntary workers, reported back to the Soviet, is a basis for new legislation.

But voluntary work for the Soviets does not stop at such matters as health, housing, and education. The militia, the organisation for preserving law and order, is also assisted by voluntary workers, usually young enthusiasts from the big factories. We may say, in fact, if the comparison is permissible, that the Soviet "Special" is the young man who, at a trade union meeting, is selected as one who is suited to do voluntary

work in the department of the militia, dealing with cases of drunkenness, theft, or other disorders, when a uniformed militiaman is not in sight!

The work of volunteers in the Soviet State is not, however, limited to local government. It also extends upwards throughout the Soviet State, right to the offices of the Central Executive Committee itself. Here, for example, in the Complaints Bureau of the President, Kalinin, there work a number of volunteers from Moscow's largest factories, sent there by their trade unions, and dealing with letters addressed to the President from all parts of the U.S.S.R. For the Soviet citizen not only has his Press to which to write, but also his President; and letters to Kalinin play an important part in exposing abuses by local authorities and the administration of factories when the complainant is unable locally to obtain redress.

It is only when the Soviet State is considered in detail, with its elected deputies, its voluntary workers, and its paid workers promoted according to merit from the rank and file of the population, that we see how, in the words of Sir Bernard Pares, "Government and people are of the same stock." This has happened because it is the people who have built up the Government of the U.S.S.R., republic by republic, institution by institution, as the demands of the welfare of the community have necessitated. The working people themselves participate in running the State; there are no longer, as the Webbs put it, "a Government and a people confronting each other."

CHAPTER XIV

A SOCIALIST CONSTITUTION

ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION of the Russian Soviet Republic, adopted in the heat of the struggle of the Russian people for liberty, the fundamental aim of the Republic was stated to be "suppressing all exploitation of man by man, abolishing for ever the division of society into classes, bringing about the Socialist organisation of society." With this end in view, "work useful to the community is made compulsory upon all," and "now, at the decisive moment in the struggle between the workers and their exploiters, there can be no place for the latter on any organ of government." There follow, as we have already seen, a number of concrete measures, increasing the freedom of the vast majority of the population and giving them democratic rights that they had never previously enjoyed; but, on the other hand, the employers of labour, the property-owners, were deprived of all political rights, of the ownership of the meeting halls and the printing presses, and, as the State was able to take them over, of all other means of production.

These essential features of the Russian Soviet Constitution were later made part of the Constitutions of other Soviet republics: both those which later joined the Union, and those which were formed in Hungary, in China, and in Bavaria. When, in 1922, the Union

was formed, each of the constituent republics included the same fundamental ideas in its Constitution.

Now it is clear that if the Constitution of any State, or of any other kind of organisation, includes a statement of aims, and measures directed towards the achievement of these aims, a time may come when, the aims having been fulfilled, the old Constitution is out of date. When, therefore, from about 1933 onwards, it has been possible in the U.S.S.R. to say that capitalism no longer exists, and that there are no longer employers of labour; when it has become possible to refer to the U.S.S.R. as a society in which everyone either works for himself or for the community, and nobody works for the profit of an employer—under these conditions it can be said that the main aims expressed in the earlier Constitutions have been accomplished, and a revised Constitution is required to establish this fact.

That is why, at the Seventh Congress of Soviets in 1935, it was decided to introduce a new Constitution for the U.S.S.R. On December 5th, 1936, this Constitution was adopted in its final form at the Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets. What are the essential features of this new Constitution of the U.S.S.R.?

First, the Soviets remain, as before, the supreme authority in the country. But the Soviet State is now described as a "Socialist State of workers and peasants," whereas, in the original Constitution of 1918, we only read of the "fundamental aim" of establishing Socialism. Second, there follows a definition of public and of private property, all the means of production being now publicly owned; but citizens are allowed the private ownership of their earnings, savings, and the necessities of human comfort. The small independent

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producer, working on his own, but not employing others for profit, is allowed, however, to possess his necessary materials and means of production. Third, reference is made to the existence of an economic plan, whereas, in the first Constitution of the Union of 1924, reference was only made to the future establishment of such a plan by the Government of the Union. According to the Constitution of 1936, " The economic life of the U.S.S.R. is determined and directed by the national economic State plan for the purpose of increasing public wealth, of a steady rise in the material and cultural level of the toilers, of strengthening the independence of the U.S.S.R. and its defence capacity." An important part of the new Constitution deals with the structure of the State, in which certain major changes are made. Finally, a section is included which deals with the Rights and Obligations of Citizens.

The main changes in the structure of the State which have been adopted in the Constitution of 1936 are: the making of suffrage universal without any exceptions; the introduction of equality of representation of town and village; the introduction of secret ballot in place of voting by show of hands; and the provision that henceforth every governing authority, not only the local one, shall be directly elected by the people. These changes, it will be noted, all introduce features, hitherto absent, which are generally accepted as democratic in character. They ensure still closer contact between the higher organs of Government and the ranks of the people. And they make the whole apparatus of the State considerably less complicated, by wiping out the intricate system of election by steps or stages.

It is impossible to understand the significance of the

changes which have been introduced in the Soviet Constitution of 1936 without recalling the reason why, in the earlier Constitutions, the particular system then prevailing was adopted. We know that the Soviets were set up throughout Russia as fighting organisations of the workers, peasants, and soldiers against the employing classes and their Government. The Soviets, therefore, naturally excluded from participation in their activity persons and officials against whom they were fighting. It was natural that when the Soviets seized the reins of government, the "exploiters" were not allowed to participate in the running of the country. Universal suffrage was adopted, with exceptions. In 1936, when the employers of labour as a class were extinct in the Soviet Union, and when former employees and former officials of the Tsarist State were either dead, abroad, or peacefully working in Soviet institutions, the franchise had already become practically universal, with the exception of some 50,000 priests. As it is not considered likely that these 50,000 priests, given full political rights, will in any way be able to obstruct the progress of the Soviet Union, they are not any longer deprived of the right to vote. Universal suffrage for all citizens of the age of eighteen and over, *with exceptions*, has simply become universal suffrage for all citizens of the age of eighteen and over. The half-witted, it should be noted, are, however, still deprived of the right to vote; and the courts may deprive citizens of this right as a result of a misdemeanour.

The unequal representation of town and village arose as a result of the leading part which the town workers played in the organisation of the Soviets and of the Soviet State. At the time of the drawing up of

the first Constitution it was considered desirable that the workers, who were introducing Socialism in industry, should continue to play a leading part in the Soviet Government. But with the final wiping out of capitalist enterprise in the villages, and the triumph of collective farming, it can no longer be said that the leadership of the workers in the towns must be specially safeguarded in the interests of Socialism, or that any discrimination in their favour can now be justified. Therefore, by 1936, the inequalities between town and country have been removed, and there is now completely equal representation of all citizens.

Voting by show of hands, we have seen, took place in the factories and at village meetings, because it was the most simple way in which a vote could be taken. And this method of voting had also its very definite utility at a time when a fierce struggle was being carried on between the working people and their employers. For, though the employers were deprived of all voting rights, there was no means of preventing them, if they so wished, from persuading or bribing certain of those who had full political rights to put up and to support candidates who would be sympathetic to them. In the factories the office staff had the right to participate in the elections. In outlook they were often close to the employers. If, when the vote was taken, those who were known to be close to the employer were seen to be supporting a particular candidate, this was a warning that the candidate was likely to be a "bosses' man," an undesirable candidate! And if this was true of the town, it was still more true of the village, where the petty employer, the local usurer, the "kulak," often had many people over whom he could exert influence. The "kulak vote" could be detected at an open

meeting, which meant that the rest of the people were warned where lay the interests of property.

In the U.S.S.R. to-day, now that there is no longer an employing class at all, the system of open voting by show of hands no longer has the positive value which it used to have. At the same time, it still retains those negative features which it has always had, and which centre on the fact that, if candidates know who votes for whom, the way is open for various methods of personal pressure and persuasion, even in the conditions of Socialist society. Even in the U.S.S.R. to-day there may be people who are not above cadging for votes. But these people are disarmed if there is secret ballot. So we find the introduction of secret ballot in the new Constitution.

We come now to the change which has perhaps aroused the greatest comment outside the Soviet Union. It has even been suggested that the replacing of indirect election by direct election means the end of all that was essential in the Soviet system ! Up to the present the structure of the Soviet State has been modelled on the lines of a working-class organisation. Now, it appears, it is to be reconstructed along the lines of a capitalist republic. Is not this a retreat from the essentials of the Soviet system ?

It should first be said quite emphatically that never, at any time, has particular stress been laid, inside the U.S.S.R., on the structure of the Soviet State as being something permanent and unalterable. The point that has been emphasised, again and again, is the fact that power in the Soviet State is in the hands of the working population. And, as we have seen in Part I, there is no tendency at the present time to make this power of the workers any less effective than it has hitherto been. As

far as the structure of the State is concerned, this has always been regarded as something which would be altered to suit changing circumstances, and so, as early as 1917, we find Lenin writing these words: "The transition from capitalism to Communism will certainly bring a great variety and abundance of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be only one: *the dictatorship of the proletariat.*" And, as we saw in our short Introduction, these words simply mean that the Government shall be in the hands of the urban and rural workers, combined with the poorer peasantry; that is, to-day, the whole population of workers, collective farmers, and small individual producers.

When we examined the formation of the Soviet State we saw that it was never built up according to a preconceived plan, but grew up in the way in which, in their struggle for better conditions, the working people happened to build it. It naturally took the form of an ordinary working-class organisation, with authority centred in a Congress, and an Executive Committee between Congresses. Such a system, as has already been pointed out, is economical; because many people can attend a Congress that lasts a few days who, because they are working as producers, could not sit for a great part of the year on a more permanent body. On the other hand, however, every organisation which is governed by periodical congresses, and by an executive committee between these congresses, is in danger of an isolation of the executive committee at the top from the membership at the bottom.

If we examine the development of the Congresses of Soviets of the Russian Soviet Republic, we find that at first they were called very often, four being held in 1918 alone; whereas they were later held only once a

year. As far as concerns the U.S.S.R., we find that the first and second Congresses met in 1922 and 1924, three more were held before the end of 1929, the sixth in 1931, the seventh in 1935, and the eighth, to deal exclusively with the amendment of the Constitution, in 1936. Thus there has been a tendency, with the passage of time, for rather greater periods to elapse between the Congresses, and for more time to be spent between them on carrying out the policy which they have decided upon.

This tendency, at first sight, might seem alarming to the democrat. But it is in fact an inevitable tendency in a community in which the problems of Government are becoming increasingly bound up with the day-to-day management of affairs, and less and less a matter of deciding general principles. In all working-class organisations the function of a congress is to establish the general principles on which the organisation is to work. The principles having been decided, the delegates return to their localities, and it is for the executive committee to see that they are carried out. Congresses, because of their very nature, are unable to exercise a detailed control of day-to-day work, for they only meet for short periods, whereas the work of any organisation or government goes on continuously. It follows from this that the more the work of government becomes the detailed carrying out of a generally agreed policy, the less work is there for a congress to do; and the greater the need for some more permanent executive body directly controlling the activities of the various organs of administration.

That is why, in the history of the Soviet State, we find that at first the Congresses of Soviets met frequently, and, later on, less often. At first there were numerous

questions of principle to be settled—the rights of the working people as against those of the employers, the organisation of defence by arming the people, the position of the Soviet State as regards the rights of nationalities; all these matters had to be decided in principle. After 1922, with the defeat of the armed intervention, the question of economic development became the main problem. When, in 1928 and 1929, it was decided finally to eliminate capitalism from the countryside and to launch a general plan of economic development to cover the whole life of the country, a final question of principle was decided. It now had to be worked out.

The weakness of the Congress of Soviets as a means of effectively controlling the day-to-day activity of the many organs of Government has been well expressed by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in *Soviet Communism*. They describe the All-Union Congress of Soviets in these terms: "This huge assembly, made up of delegates of scores of races speaking different tongues, who meet only for a week or so and then 'surrender their mandates,' and do not even know in advance each other's names, cannot, of course, develop the corporate life of a Parliament, or deal adequately with the details of legislation or administration. The Congress has been described, in fact, as little better than a picturesque 'biennial picnic' in Moscow for locally elected visitors from all parts of the U.S.S.R., whose expenses are provided from U.S.S.R. funds. Even if this were true, it would not imply that the Congress is of no political importance. . . . The mere fact that no delegate is 'denied the floor,' even if there is no effective voting, makes so representative a gathering of real political importance" (p. 83).

In these words Sidney and Beatrice Webb make crystal clear, at the present stage of Soviet development, when the basic questions of principle are to-day settled and lightning Congresses to discuss matters of principle are no longer required, the need for some more permanent body, having a "corporate life," and dealing with the day-to-day details of legislation and administration. What is required is a representative body which sits for longer periods, and which has direct contact with those people whose interests it represents. This is the new form of supreme authority which has been set up by the Constitution of 1936.

Instead of a Congress of delegates electing an Executive Committee, the supreme authority of every territory in the U.S.S.R. will now be a directly elected Supreme Soviet or Council. The citizens will directly elect their deputies not only to the local Soviet, but to the provincial and district Soviets, to the Supreme Council of their Republic, and to the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R., which will replace the Congress of Soviets and the Central Executive Committee.

At the same time, in the Government of the U.S.S.R. the two Councils, formerly parts of the Central Executive Committee, will remain. The Council of the Union will consist of delegates, each of whom represents 300,000 inhabitants, from all over the U.S.S.R. The Council of Nationalities will consist of the same number of delegates as the Council of the Union, directly elected by the population in such a way that there will be an equal number of delegates from each main national republic of the Union, and smaller numbers of delegates from each of the smaller republics within them and other smaller national territories. In this way there is a "two-chamber" system, in which each

chamber has absolutely equal powers in every respect, one chamber representing the people as a whole, the other representing the people organised as equal nations.

According to the new Constitution, then, the supreme authority of the U.S.S.R. will be directly responsible to the people as individuals, and to the people as nations. The Supreme Council will sit for about four months each year, and, between sessions, its elected Presidium will exercise very limited powers in its absence. Such a matter of importance to the people as the declaration of war, a matter which is usually in the hands of the "cabinets" of other countries, can now only be decided by the directly elected Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. However, an exception is made in the case of honouring treaties of mutual assistance, which the Presidium may fulfil without calling a session of the Supreme Council.

Should a situation arise in which the two chambers of the Soviet Government cannot agree, there is provision for the setting up of a joint conciliation committee. If this is ineffective, then the matter can only be referred to the whole country for decision, by means of new elections. If, after that, a majority in the Council of Nationalities and a majority in the Council of the Union disagreed, the contentious piece of legislation would have to be buried! It is hard to imagine, however, at the present time, so serious a dispute arising between the two Councils of the Soviet Government. On what could the representatives of the nations of the Union so disagree with the representatives of the people as a whole as to necessitate a new election? Perhaps small disagreements may arise as to the placing of new industries: shall they be on the territory of the Russian

Soviet Republic, or in the smaller republics of the Union? Or a budgetary question might arise: the Russians in the Council of the Union, representing a majority of the population of the U.S.S.R., might want more centralisation of funds in the Commissariat of Finance of the U.S.S.R. The smaller republics might oppose this, and turn down such a proposition in the Council of Nationalities. But could such a dispute prove to be irreconcilable without a new election? This seems unlikely, so that the provisions for such a dispute, while necessary on paper, may never actually have to be applied.

The last section of the new Constitution which is of interest here is that which deals with the Rights and Obligations of Citizens. The striking feature of this chapter is the small number of obligations, and the large number of rights, of the Soviet citizen.

"Work in the U.S.S.R. is the obligation of each citizen capable of working, according to the principle: 'He who does not work shall not eat.' In the U.S.S.R. the principle of Socialism is being realised: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.'" Further, every Soviet citizen must abide by the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. and obey its laws. Finally, every citizen is under the obligation to defend the U.S.S.R.

To the working man and woman in other countries these obligations of citizens will not seem unduly arduous. To those who live on rent and interest, however, who spend their lives on the Lido and the Riviera, and appear regularly each year at Ascot and spend thousands of pounds during each "season" in London —to these, and to poorer people who imitate them in a smaller way, the idea that work should be an obligation

on all may well seem an unjustifiable interference with individual liberty. But to such people, for this very reason, the dictatorship of the proletariat must inevitably be distasteful.

The Soviet State imposes the obligation to work. But it makes it possible to fulfil this obligation by granting the right to work to all citizens. This right, until 1931, could not have appeared in the Constitution of the U.S.S.R., for, until then, the Soviet State had still to face the problem of unemployment. To-day, as a result of the replacing of capitalist by Socialist production, economic crises have been made impossible in the U.S.S.R. Production is planned for use, and the only brake on increasing production is the number of people available for work. It can never be to the interest of the Soviet State to allow people to be out of work, for by employing them the general welfare must necessarily be increased.

Work without leisure is a doubtful blessing. So, by the guarantee of leisure, the new Soviet Constitution ensures that work shall not be excessive. The seven-hour day in practically the whole of industry, and paid holidays for all workers, make this right a reality at the present time. But work and leisure are not enough. In addition, the worker wants security. And this, too, is guaranteed in the new Soviet Constitution by a social insurance system which pays wages during illness, and pensions at sixty for men, fifty-five for women, and at an earlier age in dangerous occupations or in cases of invalidity. The control of the social insurance funds, as we have seen, is in the hands of the people's own elected representatives in the trade unions. Further rights, the enjoyment of which has been fully described in earlier chapters, are national equality, sex equality,

and education. All these things, guaranteed in the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R., are not promises for some distant future, but accomplished facts.

In the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. as adopted in 1924 a special chapter was devoted to the United State Political Department, or O.G.P.U., an organisation which was created "for the purpose of combining the revolutionary efforts of the United Republics to combat political and economic counter-revolution, espionage, and banditry." In the new Constitution no mention is made of this organisation, now incorporated in the Commissariat of Home Affairs. On the other hand, provisions are included which provide for the inviolability of the person and the home, and for the secrecy of correspondence. This does not mean, of course, that at a time when certain of the most aggressively inclined Fascist States are openly preparing for an attack on the U.S.S.R., and are undoubtedly sending their agents there to prepare the way for armies at a later date, they will meet with no resistance. But whereas in 1924 one of the primary tasks of the united Government was to defend the Union against capitalist influences, both inside and outside the country, to-day the internal struggle is no longer of such importance. On the other hand, however, defence against foreign aggression is even more important than before. Hence a Commissariat of Defence Industries has been set up in the new Constitution of 1936.

In concluding this chapter, two general points should be mentioned. First, it has been said in many quarters that the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. represents a "weakening" of the dictatorship of the proletariat; that this dictatorship is now coming to an end. Such a view can only arise as a result of a

misunderstanding of the term "dictatorship of the proletariat." In our Introduction we showed how the Soviet State was set up to ensure the power of the working people of town and village—that is, the power of the vast majority of the population. This power was guaranteed by giving unprecedented democratic rights to the vast majority, while the rights of the small minority of employers were ruthlessly curtailed. It is this form of government which is termed the "dictatorship of the proletariat." But if this is what the term means, then the new Constitution, which reflects the complete extinction of the employing class, can only be termed a strengthening of this "dictatorship," not its weakening. For to strengthen the democracy of the working people, now the whole population, is synonymous with strengthening the "dictatorship of the proletariat"—democracy for the whole working population.

And the second point is this. Throughout Part I there were described institutions and customs, methods of discussion and of government, which are hardly referred to at all in the Constitution, either before 1936 or after. Similarly, when we discussed the system of election, the part played by section workers in the Soviets and by public discussion, we were describing features of Soviet procedure which are not included in any Constitution. In all that we say and read about the Soviet Constitution, therefore, the following words of the Webbs must be seriously borne in mind: "In the Soviet Union, what the Western jurist is tempted to regard as the constitutional structure, namely, the pyramid of Soviets, is plainly only a fragment of it, and, as some may say, not the most important fragment. Whether by statutory enactment or accepted practice,

the constitution of the U.S.S.R. provides for the active participation of the people in the work of government in more than one way" (p. 3).

The fact that the Soviet Constitution does not cover every aspect of the work of government is not a feature that distinguishes it from the Constitutions of other countries. In no capitalist country does the Constitution express the relationship between the Treasury and the big bankers, or the War Ministry and the armament firms; and yet we know that the latter play an important part in moulding Government decisions. Similarly, in Britain, an ordinary text-book description of the system of government does not usually explain how it is that only "public schoolboys" find their way to the higher posts in the Civil Service. In every country there are facts about the control of the Government which are not described in detail in the Constitution or in text-books of political science. The facts in the U.S.S.R. have been explored by us in detail, and we can only conclude in this case that if, on paper, the Soviet system provides for the representation of the people in all organs of government, in practice this representation is far greater than any written Constitution could ever show.

CHAPTER XV

STATE AND PARTY

"THE NEW SOVIET CONSTITUTION is really not democratic at all, for in the U.S.S.R. there is only one political party." How often, in speeches and articles in this country, have such phrases been used by those who wished to prove that the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. was not really democratic! But a vital question in this connection is never asked: Do the people of the U.S.S.R. want more than one political party? Is it by the will of the vast majority, or against their will, that a situation has arisen in which there is only one lawful political party in the Soviet Union? It is on the answer to this question that the reality of Soviet Democracy stands or falls.

How did it come about that in Soviet Russia and in the Soviet Union there is only one political party? That is the first question to be answered. Secondly, what is the relationship between this one political party and the people of the country? That is the second question. Thirdly, what is the part played by this particular party in the running of the Soviet State; the position of its leader Stalin, for example, in relation to the government of the country? And, finally, is there not a danger to democracy in the fact that in the Soviet Union to-day only one political party is allowed by law? This last question will occupy us in the next chapter; the first three we shall examine here.

In the year 1905, when the first Soviets were set up by the workers of Russia, some of the most active members of these Soviets were "Bolsheviks"—that is, members of the section of the Social Democratic Party of Russia that followed the leadership of Lenin, and that obtained a majority at the Second Congress of the Social Democratic Party in 1903. The Russian word *bolshinstvo* means majority, and, when the minority at this Congress split off from the majority, the two fractions became known as "Bolshevik" and "Menshevik" respectively, the majority and minority groups. The "Bolsheviks," led by Lenin, were the majority at this Congress.

The Bolsheviks in Russia based their political activity on the teachings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. They worked for the continual improvement of the conditions of the working class, for the transfer of the landed estates to the peasants, and for the self-determination of all the nations which formed the Russian Empire. Their ultimate aim was the revolutionary overthrow, not only of Tsarism, but of capitalist production, and the social ownership and control of the productive forces of the country.

Writing in 1903, in a book which became the basic statement of Bolshevik policy at that time, Lenin wrote: "It would be a grievous error indeed to build up the party organisation in the expectation only of outbreaks of street fighting, or only upon the 'forward march of the drab, everyday struggle.' We must *always* carry on our everyday work, and always be prepared for everything. And the Revolution itself must not by any means be regarded as a single act . . . but as a series of more or less powerful outbreaks rapidly alternating with more or less intense calm. For that reason the principal content of the activity of our party

organisation . . . should be, to carry on work that is possible and necessary both in the period of the most powerful outbreaks as well as in periods of complete calm; that is to say: work of political agitation linked up over the whole of Russia, that will enlighten all aspects of life and will be carried on among the broadest possible strata of the masses. But this work *cannot possibly be carried on* in contemporary Russia without an All-Russian newspaper, issued very frequently. An organisation that is built up round this newspaper . . . will be ready *for everything*, from protecting the honour, the prestige, and continuity of the party in our periods of acute revolutionary 'depression' to preparing for, commencing, and carrying out the *national armed insurrection*" (*What Is To Be Done?* p. 131).

The main feature of such a political party lay in the fact that it was to lead the working people in every one of their activities for improving their conditions of life. It was to be a leader and organiser of the working people and peasants in a fight for improved conditions. Therefore, such a party must demand that every one of its members play an active part in the organisation; and, while the leading bodies were elected at congresses of delegates from the branches, between congresses there must be a disciplined carrying out of their decisions, and disciplined obedience to the instructions of the leading bodies in the party. The election of leaders must be accompanied by an "almost military discipline" in the execution of instructions, for the struggle that this party had to lead would be, in certain circumstances, a military struggle.

Towards the end of 1916, when the people of Russia were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the policy of the Tsarist Government, the Bolsheviks played a

prominent part, particularly in the towns and in the army, in leading strikes and demonstrations, and in carrying on propaganda for peace among the soldiers. When, in February 1917, as a result of strikes, mass demonstrations, and the refusal of the ranks in the army to continue to obey the orders of officers whom they did not respect, the Bolsheviks played a leading part in directing this unrest into channels which would force the Tsarist Government to resign. Immediately after the abdication, when the workers set up Soviets in one town after another, the Bolsheviks were among the most active participants in these Soviets. At the end of March, returning to Petrograd from exile in Siberia, Stalin wrote: "The more compact these Soviets, and the more strongly they are organised, the more genuinely do they express the revolutionary power of the revolutionary people, and the more certain is the guarantee provided against counter-revolution.

"Revolutionary Social Democrats must work to strengthen these Soviets, to make them universal, to establish contact between them under a Central Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies as the organ of the revolutionary power of the people."

And when, in April, Lenin returned from exile in Switzerland, he at once put forward the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," and the Party proceeded everywhere to carry on propaganda for the Soviets to seize State power, to put an end to the war, to confiscate the landlords' estates, and to nationalise the main industrial enterprises. In June 1917 there took place the first Congress of Soviets. The Bolsheviks had 100 delegates out of a total of 781. Their demands were turned down by the Congress. They continued their propaganda among the people; they continued to organise the

workers in trade unions and to mobilise the peasants round the village Soviets. They continued their propaganda against the war.

Between April and October 1917 a number of leading Bolsheviks were arrested by the Provisional Government. But, in spite of this, their influence grew by leaps and bounds. When, at the beginning of November, it was clear that at any time the Government might set up a military dictatorship and suppress all organisations of the workers and peasants, the Bolsheviks in Petrograd organised an armed uprising. On the following day the second Congress of Soviets met in Petrograd. A majority of the delegates were Bolsheviks, there being 390 Bolsheviks out of a total of 649 delegates. Now that they were in a majority in the Congress of Soviets the Bolsheviks proceeded to put their policy into practice. At once a manifesto was issued on peace, the land was socialised and the big estates handed over to the peasants' Soviets, and the workers in the factories were given those powers of control over the employers which have been described earlier in this book.

At this stage there were two other political parties represented in the Soviets. One, the Menshevik Party, had opposed the seizure of power by the Soviets and demanded the calling of a "Constituent Assembly" or All-Russian Parliament. But this demand received but little support from the population, who already had power in their own hands through the Soviets, and found that the Soviet Government was pursuing a policy which was completely in their interests. The other party was that of the Social Revolutionaries, a party of the peasantry, whose main demand had been the socialisation of the land. As soon as the Second Congress had declared the transfer of the landed estates

to the peasantry, the main item in the Social Revolutionary programme was fulfilled, and from then on the Social Revolutionaries had no really important matters of policy on which they could appeal to the mass of the people against the Bolsheviks. As a result, a large section of the Social Revolutionaries joined the Central Executive Committee and worked in co-operation with the Bolsheviks. And, as the prestige of the Bolshevik Party grew, many of the members from the ranks of the other parties came over to them and joined the Party.

Once the new Soviet Government was in existence it was possible to support it and be represented in it, or to work against it and try to overthrow it. The landlords deprived of their estates, the big financiers and employers of labour, and all those who, in principle, were opposed to a workers' State organised like any other working-class organisation, prepared to unite their forces for an armed attack on the Soviet State. It so came about that the Mensheviks lined up with the employers, and proceeded to armed action against the Soviets. And, at a later stage, the core of that part of the Social Revolutionary Party that still preserved its independence, and which was ready to oppose the Bolshevik majority in the Soviets by every means within its power, democratic or otherwise, attempted to organise an armed uprising against the Soviet Government. Recognising the impossibility of being returned to the Soviets in a majority by the democratic votes of the people, these parties attempted to seize power by armed force. The State, therefore, used armed force against them, and they were deprived of their legality.

It so came about that the party which had a majority of delegates in the Soviets became the only political party. Of the other parties, some of the members joined

the Bolsheviks, and others tried to organise an armed uprising against the Soviet State. The former went to increase the membership of the Party, which already was supported by the vast majority of the population, and the others joined the armed counter-revolutionary forces, and were suppressed as a result.

In this way, as a result of the fact that their policy appealed to a majority of the whole people, the Bolsheviks won control of the Soviets between February and October 1917. And, when they already had a majority and their prestige was *increasing from* day to day, they were still ready to work together with any other party that supported the Soviet State and was ready to work peacefully within it. As, however, the other parties split into those who supported the Soviets and came increasingly close to the Bolsheviks, and those who opposed the Soviets and tried to overthrow them by force, the latter were suppressed by force by the Soviet State, which had the support of the vast majority of the people. The Bolshevik Party, which had caused the Soviets to seize power, was in the end left as the only party faithful to the Soviet State that it had brought into being, but it was now an organisation with great prestige throughout the country.

As soon as the Bolshevik Party was left as the only political party in the Soviet State, a danger arose that this organisation, because it was in power, might draw to itself careerists, unscrupulous individualists, and individuals who had not the welfare of the people at heart, but merely their own personal advancement. In 1920, in face of this danger, Lenin wrote: " We are afraid of too wide a growth of the Party, as place-seekers and adventurers, who deserve only to be shot, do their utmost to get into the ruling Party. The last

time we opened wide the doors of the Party for workmen and peasants only was . . . when the Soviet Republic was in mortal danger, and when the adventurers, place-seekers, charlatans, and unreliable persons generally could in no way rely upon making a profitable career (in fact could sooner expect the gallows and torture) by joining the Communists" (*Left-Wing Communism*). In fact the Party, in order effectively to represent the very best elements in the working population, must restrict its membership. Party membership must not become cheap!

And how, it may be asked, was it to be ensured that those who were in the Party should not become divorced from the rest of the population? Were there not dangers that a small political organisation, holding great power in its hands, might become isolated from the people whom it professed to represent? It was precisely in order to combat this danger that Lenin took the initiative in organising what has come to be known as the "Party Cleansing," which consists of public meetings, in town, village, and the army, where, every few years, Party members must in public justify their membership of this Party which claims to be the "organised vanguard of the working people."

At such cleansings, which I have personally attended, every Party member must give an account of his or her life, of the part they have played in the struggle for improved conditions of the working people, and of the work they are doing to-day. Any person present may put questions. Any person present may speak. And so the merits of each Party member are fully discussed. If, at such meetings, certain people prove not to command the respect of their fellows, not to be considered worthy of membership of an organisation made

up of the best elements in the population, they are expelled from the Party. It is thus a fact, in a way which can be said of no other political party in the world, that there is democratic control by the people over the membership of the Bolshevik Party of the Soviet Union. And, with this control actually in force, it may be truly said that this Party will represent the best elements of the working people.

Sir Walter Citrine, in his *Search for Truth in Russia*, describes the process of the Party Cleansing in these words: "A Commission is sent to the factory. The members of the Party are called up before them in front of the workers, both Party and non-Party. He is required to tell his life's history, especially what he has done and is doing for the Revolution. Anyone can question him regarding both private and public matters, and, after he has been turned inside out, the Commission makes its decision.

"I remarked that this system made a spy of every man on his neighbour, and my companion again admitted that it was the duty of every worker to keep an eye on the actions and words of his fellows, and to report anything which seemed hostile to the interests of the working class" (p. 255).

Sir Walter called it "spying" if every worker watched his comrade in the Party to see that his words and actions were never hostile to the interests of the working class! And yet what could be more in the interests of the working people, and of democracy for the working people, than that every member of the Party which professed to represent them should be subject to such supervision, and to public criticism if he did not fulfil all the conditions generally considered necessary to a member of the "organised vanguard"?

It is this particular relationship between the Party in the U.S.S.R. and the people which causes the people to look upon the Party members, in general, as their best representatives. For they themselves play a part in seeing that only their best representatives shall be members of the Party ! Under such conditions it is not surprising that, more often than not, at elections to the Soviets, to the committees of trade unions, and to the boards of management of collective farms, members of the Party are elected ! It is in this way, and in this way only, that the Bolshevik Party dominates the Soviet Union at the present time. But, since it has the status of the recognised leadership of the whole people, the Bolshevik Party dominates the policy of the country.

In *Left-Wing Communism*, written as early as 1920, Lenin said : " Not a single important political or organisational question is decided by any State institution in our Republic without the guiding instructions of the Central Committee of the Party." But this power of the Party, Lenin goes on to show, rests on the will of the working people themselves: " In carrying out its work, the Party rests directly on the trade unions. . . . Without the closest connection with the trade unions, without their hearty support and self-sacrificing work, not only in the economic, but also in military organisation, it would have been, of course, impossible to govern the country and to maintain the dictatorship for two and a half years, or even for two and a half months."

Actually, the formal relationship between the Party and the State in the Soviet Union is not fundamentally different from that of, say, the Conservative Party in Britain to-day and the British State. The policy of the party which has a majority in the British Parliament becomes the policy of the Government. So, in the U.S.S.R.,

the decisions of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, since the Bolsheviks are an absolute majority in the Government, become decisions of the Government.

But under the conditions of Socialism every member of the ruling Party is also usually a worker in some State or other collective organisation. Therefore he receives instructions as a Party member from the Central Committee at the same time as he receives State instructions as a State employee. When in the U.S.S.R. to-day the Central Committee of the Party decides that a new decree is necessary, it circularises its decision to its members; and those who are in the Government see that it becomes law; those that are working throughout the U.S.S.R. in every kind of occupation see that, locally, this Party decision and State law is carried out. Purely as a matter of convenience, the informing of Party members of decisions of their Central Committee which are also made law by the Government, and the publication of the law itself, are often telescoped together into one act. It happens that a new decree of the Soviet Government may appear signed by the representative of the Government, and by J. Stalin, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. Actually this simply means that a certain decision of the Party, signed by Stalin, has been adopted as a decree of the Government, signed by the representative of the Government. Publication over the two signatures simultaneously, for the two organisations, merely saves time and space. It does not mean that Stalin or the Party have any right to sign Government documents, or vice versa.

It is often asked: What is the position of Stalin in the Soviet State? Constitutionally, the answer is that Stalin's position in the U.S.S.R. is smiliar to that of Mr. Baldwin in Britain to-day. He is the recognised

and elected leader of the ruling party. On the other hand, there is this difference—that whereas Mr. Baldwin chooses, as is the British convention, to be Prime Minister as well, Stalin prefers, as leader of his party, not to accept an important Government position as well, since he has enough to do already. In actual practice, whereas Mr. Baldwin can only claim to represent a certain section of the population of Britain, Stalin can claim that he and his party have the support of the overwhelming majority of the people of the country. Therefore, in the U.S.S.R., Stalin, as the leader of a very popular ruling party, is acclaimed as the leader of the whole people, a thing which even the most sycophantic Press would hardly try to claim for Mr. Baldwin in Britain to-day !

In connection with the status of Stalin in the U.S.S.R. I feel I must refer to one point of criticism which is raised in common by the Webbs, by André Gide, and by Sir Walter Citrine. This is the phenomenon described by the Webbs in their book as " the adulation of Stalin." Any reader of the Soviet Press, with an eye and ear trained to the English language, is likely to be sometimes shocked by references to " our dearly beloved Stalin," " our glorious leader," and so on. This matter has often struck foreign observers, and is cited time and again as evidence of a servile attitude on the part of the population towards Stalin, and thus as *symptomatic of a lack of democracy.*

Personally, I must frankly admit that for at least three years in the U.S.S.R. I was often unfavourably impressed by the lavish way in which love and praise of Stalin was expressed in public utterances of all types of Soviet citizens. To the English ear such words seemed to be more appropriate to religion than to modern

politics, and there is no doubt that I, too, was at first affected in the same way as the Webbs by this. But my feelings on this matter were completely changed when I happened one day to see a letter from a young worker to his brother. It began : " Honoured Beloved Brother ! " These were the same words, or words closely similar to, those which had been thoroughly unpleasing to me when addressed to Stalin, because in English they suggested degradation and servility ! But the young Russian used them to his brother. And when I suggested that he should simply write " Dear Brother " he was literally shocked. The English have a reputation for being a cold-blooded nation !

When André Gide began a letter to Stalin in the same words which he would have used in French, his guide suggested that a little verbal embroidery was necessary. Gide was shocked. But if I wrote to André Gide in French to-morrow, and finished up " yours sincerely," Gide would certainly consider that I did not know French, or that I was being rude. The French, you see, happen to conclude their letters with a rigmarole which, to the English, seems artificial and somewhat servile.

When the Webbs discover a " deliberate exploitation by the governing junta of the emotion of hero-worship, of the traditional reverence of the Russian people for a personal autocrat," they substantiate this view by examples of an apparent extravagance of language such as we have mentioned, which in English appears utterly ridiculous. And, while it is obviously not going to be the policy of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. to try to stimulate hatred of its leaders, but the opposite, I feel that the translation of the language used gives an utterly unreal picture of the situation.

When the people of the U.S.S.R. wish to express their

loyalty to their recognised leader they can only do it in their own language. Actually, the language of the oriental peoples of the U.S.S.R. is even more flowery than Russian. If the Russian worker writes to his brother as "dearly beloved," we must not consider these words to be servile when coming from a group of collective farmers and addressed to Stalin. On the contrary, they are fraternal words, brotherly words, and not servile words. When these facts are taken into account I think it is true to say that not one example of the "adulation of Stalin" which the Webbs give contains any example of adulation greater than the words expressed by millions of British workers about Dimitrov at the time of the Leipzig trial.

All people when in foreign countries tend to assume that they understand the language better than they do, and are happy if they can translate sentences phrase by phrase without a dictionary. Both the Webbs and André Gide, cultured people as they are, have not absorbed the *idiom* of the Russian language. By mechanical translation they have made errors of interpretation which can have serious political repercussions; for the question of whether the Russian workers address Stalin in the way that Lady Houston wrote about the late King or as the Archbishop of Canterbury addresses God, or as one workman addresses his brother, is a question of vital importance in considering the degree of democracy which exists to-day in the U.S.S.R. Actually, as I discovered after three years, the workers of the U.S.S.R. use the same words in writing to Stalin as in writing to a much admired brother.

The relations between the Soviet State and the Communist International have also aroused curiosity. But there should be no mystery about this matter. In

Brussels there is located the Labour and Socialist International. If, in Belgium, the people return the Socialist Party to power, a situation would exist in which the ruling party was a member of the Socialist International located on Belgian territory. But that would not make the Belgian Government and the International synonymous organisations. Now it unfortunately happens that only a country where the Communist Party is in power will allow the Communist International the right to be located on its territory. Therefore the Communist International is situated in Moscow, on Soviet territory. But the connection goes no further than this. It is true, of course, that Stalin is a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. But so is Harry Pollitt. And, in Belgium, the leader of the Socialist Party is a member of the Executive of the Labour and Socialist International.

There is one final aspect of the status of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. which may raise questions in the minds of many readers. We have already mentioned, in dealing with factory management in the U.S.S.R., that on the Triangle, which virtually controls the affairs of a Soviet factory, there sits a representative of the Party organisation in the factory. To those who look upon political parties as *parliamentary* parties, such a state of affairs suggests something abnormal—that a political party should enjoy the same status as the appointed representative of the State, the manager; or the elected representative of the workers, the trade union organiser.

But it should now be clear that the Party in the U.S.S.R. is not a parliamentary party. It is the organised political leadership of the people; the organisation of

their best political representatives. As such, the Party holds the respect of the people, and they are absolutely willing that this organisation of theirs should be represented on such bodies as the Triangle in the factory.

The democratic importance of political representation of the working people, as distinct from their mass representation through the State and trade unions, is being clearly demonstrated at the present time in Spain. As soon as the armed struggle began between the Fascist rebels and the elected Government, the parties of the Workers' Alliance, which together formed the recognised leadership of the people, just as the Communist Party does in the U.S.S.R. to-day, began to undertake all kinds of activities which previously had been activities of the State. They undertook these activities because the people supported such action, and the Workers' Alliance continued to be, not merely a parliamentary combination of forces, but a leader and organiser of the working people in their fight for democracy. As a result of this, it is reported from Spain that, attached to every regiment, there are "political commissars," representing the parties of the Workers' Alliance. So, alongside the organisations of State, such as the army and the organs of administration, there is a political leadership, consisting of "political commissars," representatives of those parties who form the organised vanguard of the people in their struggle. Such political leadership no doubt also exists to-day in all the factories that have been taken over by the State.

In the Soviet Union, in the course of the transfer of the factories from private hands to the State, this same political leadership became necessary, just as it did in the army during the fight against foreign intervention. The Party began in this way to play a leading part in

the administration, together with the appointed official of the State, and the elected representative of the trade unions. While, if a party that did not command the support of the vast majority of the population acted in this way, the people would resent such action and oppose it; when it is done by a party of a new kind, consisting only of the recognised best elements drawn from the ranks of the people themselves, they give it their full support.

The one-party system in the U.S.S.R. has developed as a result of the will of the people. Having once returned to power a party which immediately passed a number of laws, basically changing the relations between worker and employer, peasant and landlord, to the advantage of the working people, they found that this party was their very own in a way in which no political organisation had ever previously been. Finding that they were able to exercise control over the membership of this party by cleaning out all elements which they considered hostile to their interests, they found that they could really ensure that this party contained all that was best among them. In this way, at every election, the members of the party tended to be returned in a majority; and the idea of allowing other parties to be organised, trying to oust this party from power, was rejected by the people as being a means by which the enemies of the working people might try to return to power.

In the Soviet State there has developed a one-party system. It arose as a result of the operation of the will of the vast majority of the people. It occurred democratically.

But now, to-day, when the Soviet system is securely on its feet, does not this one-party system prove a limitation to real democracy? This is the question which must now be answered.

CHAPTER XVI

IS A "PARTY SYSTEM" NECESSARY?

THE SOVIET STATE, we have seen, was set up as an organisation of the whole working population of the country, for the purpose of pursuing their common interests, and for improving their own conditions at the expense of the employing class. The Soviet State has always had the structure of a workers' organisation.

But does anyone ever suggest that a "party system" is necessary to democracy in an organisation of the working people for a common purpose? Has anyone ever criticised trade unions as being undemocratic on the grounds that there is no system of political parties within them? And the same question may be asked concerning the myriads of other democratic organisations that exist in the capitalist world to-day, from trade unions to the businessmen's West End clubs, from the League of Nations Union to table-tennis societies. In all these organisations the officers are elected by the members to carry out the will of the members. These organisations may differ in the degree of their democracy, but nobody attacks them as undemocratic because, at their elections of officers, rival parties do not put up rival candidates.

The essential fact about democratic organisations is

this: in every organisation of people for pursuing a *common* purpose there is no question of a system of parties being associated with democracy. Elections of officers take place on their merits, just as, in the U.S.S.R., the election of delegates to the Soviets has always taken place. When, on the other hand, we find that there is some form of a "party system" in operation, as occurs only in the parliamentary State, we find that, instead of elections being held in order to return the best representatives of the people as a whole to positions of responsibility, they take place in order to return one or another party with a majority, in order to carry out a particular type of policy. Instead of elections being to return the best people to power, we find they are organised in order to return a particular group with a particular policy. But these conflicting policies can only exist with any degree of continuity on the basis of continuous conflicts of interest among the population. And these continuous conflicts can only be based on rival—as opposed to common—interests among the people themselves.

If we look back at the historical development of the British Parliament we find that it arose as a means, not for uniting the community in a common interest, but for reconciling conflicting interests. In its origin Parliament was an institution in which the conflicting interests of the two classes, landowners and industrialists, were reconciled. The Tory Party in its early days was the direct instrument of the landowners, the Whig Party—of the capitalists. Each party, at elections, tried to include within its programme sufficient promises to win a majority of the electorate, in order to be returned to office and to pursue a policy consistent with the interests of the class which it represented.

As time went on, the landlords of Britain became increasingly fused with the industrialists. The landlords went into business, and the business men acquired land by purchase or marriage. The landlord and capitalist classes in Britain became fused into one; and the development of Whig and Tory Parties into Liberal and Conservative reflected this uniting of the two classes. The two parties now began to represent rival factions in the one ruling class of the country.

But such a system, in which the political parties represented conflicting tendencies within one class, only continued for the very short historical period when the power of the landowner-capitalists was uncontested. Soon the working class forced its way into politics, and a new alignment began to develop—Conservative-Liberal Coalition against Labour. To-day the property-owning class in Britain is almost completely united behind a single political party—the so-called "National" Coalition. As far as the employers are concerned, we have the operation, with only a small minority of dissentients, of the principle "One class, one party." The Labour Movement, in so far as it does not also realise this principle, is unable to put forward an effective challenge to the ruling "National" Government of the employers, so that we see that the Party system is closely bound up with the existence of classes in society and their conflicting interests.

It is completely misleading to refer to a "party system" as in any way typical of democratic institutions. The "party system" is a very particular form of democracy, of an exceptional character, which has arisen only in the parliamentary State as a means by which conflicting classes could reconcile their differences without resort to arms. As we have seen from

examples of working-class organisations and peaceful clubs of business men, when a society exists for pursuing the common aims of its members there is no place within it for a "party system."

But the Soviet State was set up by the people of Russia for pursuing their common interests. The system of election, adopted from the very start, was that of discussing each candidate, his merits and shortcomings, with a view to deciding whether he was suitable to represent the electors on the public authorities of the country. Would this delegate be the best representative of the electors? Would he be the best equipped of them to see that their instructions were carried out on the Soviet to which he was elected? Clearly, where elections took the form of sending delegates to the public authorities, with instructions as to the policy they were to pursue, there was no longer any place for "parties" presenting opposing programmes to the people.

So a "party system" became out of place in the Soviet State, just as a "party system" is quite out of place in a working-class organisation in any capitalist country at the present time.

Other questions are sometimes raised in this connection: Surely in the U.S.S.R. everyone does not agree? Surely there must be discussion on various questions? Certainly there is disagreement and there is discussion. And, as most foreign observers are bound to admit, there is, if anything, too much discussion, rather than too little, from the standpoint of efficient execution. But disagreement and discussion are no basis for the formation of political parties unless there are groups of people, with certain continuous common interests, who are ready to unite together

for a continuous period on a number of basic issues.

For example, to take recent legislation in the U.S.S.R., many people did not approve of the law prohibiting abortion; many had amendments to propose to the draft of the new Constitution; many may not have approved of the model statutes for the collective farms; and many may not have liked the reduction of interest on State loans from 8 and 7 to 4 and 3 per cent overnight! But an opposition political party could hardly have been organised out of these individuals, because there was no definite group of citizens affected by all these issues in the same way. There is no reason why the same person that disliked certain clauses in the abortion law should have opposed any of the other measures. There is no reason why the person who disliked the reduction in rates of interest should also have been a strong supporter of legal abortion. There is no reason why a person who did not like the model statutes for the collective farm should have opposed the new Constitution of the Soviet State. In this way, since there exist no longer permanently conflicting group interests in the Soviet State, where all are working for the general improvement in the living conditions of the whole community, there can be no basis for a political "party system" such as exists in the parliamentary State in a class society.

But stay; there is one recruiting-ground for an "opposition party." There are still people—disgruntled individuals; ex-employers or Tsarist officials; deposed leaders from the working-class movement itself; people who are constitutionally "counter-suggestible" and for whom Soviet psychologists have not yet evolved a cure; people with personal grievances against certain Government officials; people who oppose every measure of

the Soviet Government, not on its merits, but because it is a measure passed by the Government; and others like them—who may be "agin' the Government," though having no alternative positive programme to propose. Such types of citizen exist in the Soviet Union to-day. It is only they who have anything in common that would bring them together continually as a permanent opposition party.

But such elements are well known to the working-class movement, and to every democratic organisation throughout the world. They are the people who, in every democratic organisation, do not command respect, and therefore resort to every form of obstruction in order to draw attention to themselves or to avenge themselves for being ignored. Is the Soviet State to encourage such people to form a political party, to carry on purely negative propaganda on every issue, attacking each measure of the Government, not on its merits, but on principle? The people of the U.S.S.R. do not want such a party, and they support the Government in seeing that such disruptive organisations shall not come into existence.

For what would the effect of such a party be under existing conditions in the U.S.S.R.? It would be a resort of every remnant of opposition to the working-class movement of the Soviet Union. Ex-employers and ex-opponents of the system, agents of foreign Powers and people who were under their influence—all the social undesirables would flock round such an organisation in order to discredit the Soviet Government and to impede the progress which it is making. Thus, an "opposition party" would be the means by which all that is hostile to the Soviet system would find expression and a means of organising itself. This is a

procedure which the people of the U.S.S.R., with the exception of the types already mentioned, are unanimous in preventing.

We come to the conclusion that in the Soviet Union to-day a party system would be as incongruous as a party system within, say, a British trade union. In a community or an organisation where the members have common interests there is no place for a party system. In so far as, in the British trade unions, something approaching party disputes has developed, this is a weakness of the movement, and not its strength. Anything approaching conflicting parties in the trade unions can only arise as a result of serious conflicts within the working class. Not much investigation is necessary to discover that such disputes invariably centre round one question: Shall the trade unions be fighting organisations against the employers or not? The faction that answers "No" to this question can be looked upon as an employers' "party" within the trade unions, the existence of which causes the trade unions to be less effective as a democratic organisation of the workers *against* the employers. Really effective trade unionism would include no employers' "party," and would be united on the basis of militant struggle.

But the case against the existence of a "party system" is not necessarily a justification for the continued existence of a single political party. Therefore we must now consider further the rôle of the single party in the U.S.S.R. to-day, and whether its existence is consistent with democracy or not.

Let us imagine that at some future date, in Britain, a Labour Party was returned to power, pledged to a radical programme of change in the interests of the hand-and-brain workers of Britain, who amount to

over 90 per cent of the population of the country. Suppose that, to meet the opposition of the property-owners, emergency measures had to be taken, which received the support of the vast majority of the people of the country, who organised strikes and demonstrations of support. Suppose that the property-owners then organised armed opposition, and that the people took up arms on behalf of their own Government. Suppose that, in the course of the struggle, all that was best in the other political organisations of the country came over to the support of the Government, as representing the will of the democracy of Britain. And suppose that what remained of other political organisations, representing the interests of private property at all costs, supported the taking up of arms against the State. In such conditions would not the prestige of the party in power grow? Would not the people, as they fought for the Government of this party which represented their interests, come to the conclusion that this party, which represented them against the attacks of the property-owners, should never again go out of office?

Suppose, moreover, that this party of the working people, finding itself in a position in which it was called upon to lead its supporters, not only by appealing to them at elections, but in organising their struggle against the counter-attack of the employers in every locality and in every factory, decided only to admit as members those who played an active part in its work, and abolished such offices as that of "subscribing member." Suppose, too, that in order to prevent careerists creeping into its ranks, it started to hold public cleansings, in which all workers would report on the actions and speeches of the party members, with a

view to eliminating all that did not loyally represent the working people: would not the introduction of such features strengthen this one party, so that the people would become determined to improve its personnel more and more, but never to let this party, as such, be put out of office again?

It is by regarding the question of a single party in this light—as a possible line of future development in our own country—that I think the question can be most clearly seen in its correct perspective. We can see that in certain conditions, the people might democratically support a "one-party" system. They would do this in conditions similar to the experience of the Russian Revolution, when a serious conflict occurred between the people and their party on the one hand and the property-owners on the other, and when the party of the people in such circumstances led their struggle for democratic rights against the attempts of property to suppress them. A party that led the people in such a struggle would gain enormously in prestige. When, at the victorious conclusion of the struggle, a situation arose in which this one party now combined all the most active fighters for the liberty of the people, is it likely that the people would ask that the other parties, the parties of their enemies, should once more be given an opportunity to rule? Is it likely that the people would want the political organisations that had taken up arms against them to be again afforded legal rights as soon as they had been defeated in the military struggle? Obviously the reverse is the case. At the end of such a struggle the people would not ask that the other parties be allowed to operate again, but, on the contrary, they would do everything to strengthen the one party that had shown itself to be their leader in the

struggle. The people would choose in future to have a one-party system, since now the one party would be the only one that they could absolutely trust.

But might they not ask that this party be disbanded, and that a system without any political party be introduced? Here, I think, the answer is in the negative. For, in the course of the struggle, the party would have established itself, not as a parliamentary party of the old type, but as the organised leadership of the people. And it is as such, not as a parliamentary organisation, that they would want it to continue to exist. Lenin, writing in 1920, made the following illuminating comment on the position of the party after the workers have established a system of real democracy:

"Classes remain, and will remain for years, everywhere after the proletarian conquest of power. Perhaps in England, where there is no peasantry, the period will be shorter, but even there the small proprietors, holders of property, exist. . . . The dictatorship of the proletariat is a resolute persistent struggle, sanguinary and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative, against the forces and traditions of the old society. . . . Without an iron party, hardened in fight, without a party possessing the confidence of all that is honest in the given class, without a party capable of observing the disposition of the masses and of influencing it successfully, to conduct such a struggle is impossible. . . . Whoever in the least weakens the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship) aids in reality the bourgeoisie against the proletariat" (*Left-Wing Communism*).

In the view of Lenin, the party, as the organised leadership of the mass of the people, must not be disbanded after the seizure of power, but, on the contrary,

must be strengthened, in order to ensure that the real democracy achieved should not again be overthrown by the armed forces of the property-owners. And in dealing with this one party Lenin stresses the essential need for discipline in a period of historic struggle between the working people on the one hand and the owners of property on the other. In the next chapter we shall discuss this question of discipline further, for it is the greatest of errors to assume, as is sometimes done, that democracy and discipline are mutually exclusive terms. Actually, the only effective democracy of the people must be a disciplined democracy, for "democracy" of the people without discipline is sheer anarchy, and no anarchy has ever been able to preserve its independence against the opposition of an organised enemy.

And now, in conclusion, a few words must be said about one more problem. Criticism is often raised that in the U.S.S.R. to-day the ruling party consists of only about 2 million members out of a total population of 170 millions. It is maintained that this organisation is so small that its domination in the State cannot be anything but undemocratic. First, as a matter of information, it is worth pointing out that not only are there 2 million members of the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R., but an additional 5 or 6 million members of the Communist Youth, from which the best representatives later join the Party. However, this is a minor point, and the actual criticism can be faced even if we take the critic's minimum figure of 2 million Party members in the U.S.S.R.

Two facts must be borne in mind about the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. First, it is a party of active workers; there are no "paying members" who do no

work. Every member is an active member. Secondly, as stressed by Lenin, the Party must not be allowed to grow too rapidly, for that would mean a deterioration in quality, and a deterioration in the quality of a body which forms the "organised leadership" of the community would have disastrous results. Finally, in order to appreciate the size of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. in comparison with the political parties of Britain we must have our facts clear, and not misrepresent them.

The individual membership of the Labour Party in Britain to-day amounts to between 300,000 and 400,000. But it would probably not be going too far to estimate that less than one in 20 of these are active members. So that the proportion of the Labour Party membership which is strictly comparable to the membership of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R.—all of which is active—is about 5 per cent. The membership of the British Labour Party that is active in doing the party's work among the people of Britain can be put at about 15,000 or 20,000. This is about one in every 3,200 of population at the minimum, and at the most about one in every 2,400 of the population. And yet, if a Labour Government were returned to power, I cannot imagine anyone complaining that the party did not represent the people "because it is so small." Yet, as compared with the U.S.S.R., a ruling party that comprised only one person in every 2,000 or 3,000 of the population would be regarded as a very small party. For the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. includes 2 million members—one in every 85 citizens! So, while the Labour Party in Britain may boast of its size, and claim one active worker for every 2,000 or 3,000 of the people, in the U.S.S.R. the Communist Party is criticised as

being unrepresentative because one in every 85 citizens is an active member !

But the argument does not finish here. For, if it is true that the Labour Party in Britain can claim one in every 2,000 or 3,000 inhabitants as its active members, the other political parties certainly each have less active members than the Labour Party. Therefore, taking all the political parties in Britain together, their combined active membership cannot amount to more than one in every 1,000 of the population. So that, taking the whole of our parliamentary system, the political parties that are the only organisations putting up candidates at elections comprise about one active member for every thousand of the people of the country. Dictatorship by a small minority ? Yes, indeed, whereas in the U.S.S.R. the Communist Party claims one in every 85 of the population, and can thus claim to be comparatively representative !

Lastly, let me again remind you of the Party Cleansing in the U.S.S.R., by which the ordinary citizen exercises control over the membership of his Party. What control have we poor British citizens over the one thousandth of our population that makes itself active in politics ? If I do not like the type of people who become politicians in this country, I have no opportunity of seeing that others take their place. We have no cleansing of our political parties at public meetings to ensure that they shall only represent the very best elements of the people ! No wonder, then, that in disgust many British citizens never exercise their right to vote at all, disliking all the politicians who are thrust at them by the one-thousandth of the population organised as active members of our great political parties !

No; the criticism that the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. is too small to represent the people is nonsense. It is the greatest political party in any country of the world. It is also the greatest in proportion to population. It is greater in proportion to the total population that it represents than all the active members of political parties in Britain put together. And it is subject to democratic control by the people themselves in the institution of the Party Cleansing. It is not incomprehensible that such an organisation commands the respect of the whole population, and that Soviet democrats demand that this form of leadership shall be preserved, and that rival organisations aiming at disuniting the people shall not be permitted.

CHAPTER XVII

DEMOCRATIC DISCIPLINE AND FREEDOM OF OPPOSITION

We come now to a question which has been very frequently raised during the past year, a matter which has been brought once more into the limelight by the trials of opposition groups which have taken place in Moscow. This is the question of "freedom of opposition" under Soviet conditions, and the extent to which such freedom is justifiably limited in the interests of democratic discipline.

Now, if we consider any kind of democratic organisation in any part of the world, we find that it has to be concerned, not only with preserving its members' freedom of individual expression, but also with preserving the majority of members from individuals and minorities who occupy hours of valuable time with unpopular speeches, and who thus obstruct action in the interests of the majority. If we take a business men's club with its proverbial bore, a shareholders' meeting with the usual shareholder with a grievance, or the trade union branch with the member who is consistently a nuisance, we find that every organisation, professing to be run in the interests of the majority, must take steps to protect this majority against undisciplined minorities. Democracy, therefore, does not mean simply giving individuals the opportunity to

voice their personal views, but also it means that the people shall have the opportunity to refuse to hear those whose views are antagonistic to them, and the expression of which is an obstruction to the carrying out of a generally accepted policy. In democratic societies functioning within the capitalist State, such persons may be simply expelled from their organisations. But the Soviet State cannot simply expel recalcitrant "members," for two principal reasons. First, the surrounding States might not accept the persons expelled; and secondly, such persons, once expelled, might be far more use to the enemies of the community than if kept within its frontiers. Trotsky was simply expelled from the Workers' State—and his activities since have confirmed the view that less harm would have been done if he had been isolated in Siberia.

Once the problems of a democratic organisation become those of a State as well, and of a State surrounded by hostile States, simple expulsion of minorities that obstruct the common business is no longer practicable. In dealing with such cases the Soviet State is forced by circumstances to remove such persons from society, while keeping them within its frontiers. This is why, in the U.S.S.R., certain offenders against the will of the majority may be sent into exile.

It is only when this question of political exile is seen as the Soviet equivalent of expulsion, as practised by democratic organisations elsewhere, that it can be fully understood. The Soviet State is a workers' organisation. Workers' organisations expel obstructionists, and, however democratic they are, they will still have to face the problem of so dealing with such people. The Soviet State has the same problem, but it cannot expel these people from its territory as a rule,

simply because they are not acceptable to the rulers of the territory outside the U.S.S.R. Further, the expulsion of people who are enemies of the majority of the people of the U.S.S.R. would be in general unwise, for it would be giving them an opportunity to carry on their activity from outside, thus strengthening the enemies of the U.S.S.R.

Some readers may be a little disturbed at this somewhat brutal statement of the case, under Soviet conditions, for exiling political opponents. But nobody must be misled by what I have said into thinking that anyone who disagrees with any person in authority is exiled in the U.S.S.R. On the contrary, there is a phenomenal amount of discussion in the U.S.S.R. by the general public on all vital issues. The Soviet citizen who is exiled is not a person who has simply disagreed. It is the person who, having made proposals and having been defeated, continues to obstruct all constructive business by repeatedly putting forward again and again the rejected point of view, and who thus becomes a thorn in the flesh of the whole of society. Such was Trotsky, who for years was putting forward his minority views at every popular gathering in opposition to the leaders of the Soviet Government, and who was finally exiled because he was organising secret groups to oppose the policy democratically adopted by the whole people. He was thus obstructing the further development of the country in the direction decided upon by the people, and was expelled.

The extent to which the Soviet Government must be vigilant on such questions as discipline is determined, not by the structure of the Soviet State alone, but by the fact that it is surrounded by a hostile world. It is quite impossible to realise the full implications of

discipline in the U.S.S.R. by simply comparing, as we have so far done, the Soviet State with democratic organisations elsewhere. In order to obtain a true picture we must make our comparison with other democratic organisations at a time when they are waging a struggle for their existence, when they are carrying on some great militant campaign in the interests of their members and are being subjected to every kind of attack. The Soviet State surrounded by a capitalist and partly Fascist world cannot be compared with a trade union in a period of industrial peace. It must be compared with a trade union during an industrial dispute. And we all know that, in an industrial dispute, a union will exercise disciplinary pressure on its members of a kind that will not be considered necessary in time of peace.

Since it was first created, the Soviet State has been waging a struggle against enemies both inside and outside its territory. Being a democratic State of the working people, it came into conflict with the landowners and employers from the very beginning of its existence. These enemies, with foreign help, took up arms against the Soviet State. The State had to wage a war for its freedom. Later it had to wage a war against the small capitalist minority in the villages, and, all along, it has had to build up its defences and consolidate itself against a possible further attack from outside repeating the experiences of 1918 to 1922.

During a strike the members of a trade union have to fight a battle with the employers. Force is used on both sides—the workers try to force the employers to capitulate for fear of loss of profits, and the employers try to coerce the workers from sheer hunger. The workers may resort to putting machinery out of order,

to the picketing of factories, and so on. The employers will undoubtedly call in the police on the side of themselves to " protect their property." What is the attitude of the workers in such circumstances to recalcitrant minorities ?

In every strike the employer usually finds some individual or group of individuals among the workers who, out of a desire for immediate personal gain, or simply through a lack of knowledge of the issues at stake, is ready to go on working or to persuade fellow workers to accept the bosses' terms. The employer can find allies among such people, against their own comrades. In every strike the workers picket such deserters, and " peaceful picketing " may be carried, relatively speaking, quite as far as " exile to Siberia," if we look at the two types of struggle in perspective.

The truth of the matter is that under all conditions a struggle by a democratic organisation for its freedom is a limitation on the democratic rights of the opponents of that freedom. And once, in a critical situation, a minority continues to oppose the interests of the majority, such a minority becomes, consciously or not, a weapon of the enemy against the democracy concerned. Here again we only repeat what was said in our Introduction—that democracy and dictatorship are not mutually exclusive.

In the Soviet Union the application of all decisions by the Soviet authorities is the direct responsibility of every citizen, for every citizen is a worker in some State organisation, and every member of a Soviet does work in one of the departments of that Soviet. In Britain, with its parliamentary system, there is no reason why, within certain limits, continual opposition in Parliament to the policy of the Government should obstruct

the carrying out of that policy. If a majority in the British Parliament passes a certain law to-morrow, the opponents of the law may continue verbally to oppose it. But the Civil Service will have to carry it out all the same, and will have no right of criticism.

In the U.S.S.R. the Civil Service includes the people who oppose the policy decided upon as well as those who support it. In such circumstances it is clear that to continue actively to oppose a decision arrived at by a majority would, in practice, mean sabotaging its execution. So, from a purely organisational standpoint, we see the absolute necessity for the disciplined execution of democratic decisions in the U.S.S.R.

The idea that majority decisions should be binding on minorities is generally accepted in Britain as far as the practical execution of these decisions is concerned. But there often remains the idea that while the minority should carry out the decision in practice, it should have the right to oppose its execution in theory at the same time. Such a view, however, is invariably abandoned whenever there is some urgent problem on hand, such as a war, involving the country as a whole, or a strike, involving a trade union. For even in Britain it has been found that concerted action can be obstructed, not only by people refusing to act, but by their encouraging others not to act. Propaganda against carrying out a majority decision may be an even more effective form of sabotage of that decision than a direct refusal to carry it out personally.

In the U.S.S.R., where the whole community is in constant action for the general improvement of conditions and for strengthening itself against attack, it is clear that minority opposition to majority decisions might well become a serious obstruction to the carrying

out of these decisions, and thus play directly into the hands of the enemies of the U.S.S.R. whose main requirement is to obstruct its internal development.

The recognition of the need for discipline in a democratic organisation does not necessarily mean, however, any curtailment of the freedom of the ordinary citizen. For, if the ordinary citizen considers such discipline necessary to the common interest, he will personally be an enforcer of such discipline, not a violator, and the discipline will thus be an expression and a defence of his freedom, not a violation of it. This point is of particular importance in discussing such a question as freedom of speech in the U.S.S.R. to-day.

I have often been asked, since returning from the Soviet Union, whether a citizen in Moscow can get up in a park and attack the Government as he can in Hyde Park in this country. My first reply usually is, "God forbid that he should want to!"—for it is hard to imagine a more ineffective freedom than the ability to address a handful of regular Hyde Park listeners on a Sunday afternoon; that is, if one is interested in effective speech that influences people to act, and not simply in exercising one's lungs, which can be equally well done in a bedroom with the window open.

Secondly, it is worth mentioning that the Soviet workers, able to hold their meetings in the assembly rooms of the country free of charge, and being able to meet in their factories to discuss all matters of interest to them, do not need to go to a park to air their views.

But a far more important point than these is the question: Do Soviet workers want to get up and attack their Government in public meetings? And, if certain individuals do want to do this, do the majority of

workers want to listen to such speakers? The whole question of freedom of speech is fundamentally answered in the reply to these two questions.

First, it is only a supposition of the Britisher, two thousand miles away, that the workers in the U.S.S.R. want to get up and attack the Government. Actually, they are no more likely to want to attack the Soviet Government than trade unionists in Britain are likely to attack trade unionism. The Soviet State has been built up by the organised activity of the people themselves; it is *their* State, and as such they are interested in defending, not attacking it. Of course, a small minority of people might want to attack the Soviet State, and this was particularly true in the early days when the property-owning class still held considerable influence, and still could command a limited number of spokesmen among the workers and peasants themselves. But these people were a small minority, and cannot be described typical.

During five years in the U.S.S.R. I have invariably had the impression that the people have no desire to attack the Government, because they look upon it as their own, and as serving their own interests. Of course, I do not wish to say that there are no persons at all who would like to criticise the Government. There obviously are such people. But if these people are exceptions, and not the rule, then we must take it that there is freedom for the vast majority of the people to express themselves, but that a small minority does not enjoy such freedom.

But there is a second aspect to the matter. Freedom does not only consist in the freedom of the individual to harangue the masses, but in the freedom of the masses to choose who shall harangue them. No democratic organisation in the world claims to give absolute

freedom to every member to put forward indefinitely an unpopular point of view. For obviously such a person at a certain point obstructs the whole work of his democratic organisation.

For example, during the period from 1924 to 1928, after the death of Lenin, and when Trotsky was repeatedly challenging the policy of the Goverment, opposition was openly expressed by Trotsky and his followers. But at last, exasperated by the continued attempts of small minorities of Trotskyists to obstruct all business in order to popularise a thoroughly unpopular point of view, the State finally took the step of suppressing this opposition. And this suppression received the general approval of the people, because this form of opposition had become a public nuisance.

In the Soviet Union to-day the freedom of workers to criticise their superiors and Government institutions does not extend to freedom to attack the Government as such, because the people as a whole support this Government and to not oppose it. If a foreigner visiting the U.S.S.R. tries, as sometimes happens, to criticise the Soviet Government in the Moscow Park of Culture and Rest—the nearest thing to, though very far from, our Hyde Park—he will have a whole mass of people arguing with him in defence of what they call "our Government." They will defend this Government by argument, while probably respecting his person as a foreigner to a sufficient extent not to take violent measures. But if the enemy of the Government were a Soviet citizen, the people concerned in the argument might well call the militia to arrest this counter-revolutionary, just as, in Spain to-day, the people in Government territory would act towards a person who was chalking the walls with swastikas,

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or carrying on still more pernicious activity in the interests of Hitler and Franco, enemies of Spanish democracy.

The essential fact which must be appreciated is that in the U.S.S.R. to-day citizens are not interested in attacking the State or the Government; what concerns them is to improve its work. And every kind of discussion, and of criticism, calculated to improve the working of the Soviet State in the interests of the population is, as we have seen, not only allowed, but actively encouraged.

When the trials of Zinoviev and Kamenev, Radek and Sokolnikov, took place in Moscow, reference was made in many British newspapers to the significance of these trials as evidence of widespread opposition to the "Stalin régime," and the impossibility of expressing this opposition by legal means. This interpretation of the facts is the reverse of the truth.

If, in the U.S.S.R. to-day, there were widespread opposition to the Government, there would be the same symptoms as in Fascist Germany: illegally printed leaflets would circulate in the factories, there would be organised discontent among the people throughout the country, occasionally showing itself in some lightning strike or demonstration against the authorities, and batches of workers would be arrested in groups of thirty and forty. But none of these things happen. And since, in Tsarist Russia, such things did occur, it cannot be said to be for lack of experience that they do not occur to-day. Therefore we can only conclude that such widespread opposition to the Government does not exist, and, whatever the trials do denote, it is not this widespread discontent that some newspaper editors would welcome.

But if the Moscow trials do not denote the existence of mass discontent, they do denote the existence of a number of cases of individual discontent so great as to lead to the most dastardly conspiracies against the community. What is the explanation of such cases of personal discontent? Is their existence a serious flaw in the Soviet system of democracy?

It is the experience of the working-class movement in all countries that persons who, at one time or another have played a leading part, have at other times had to be expelled from the movement in which they once fought, and have become its avowed enemies. Sir Oswald Mosley can claim to be an old member of the Labour Party, and Mussolini of the Socialist Party of Italy. J. H. Thomas and Ramsay MacDonald were once admired Labour leaders, and Doriot, now one of the most active pro-Fascists in France, was in the Communist Party. Why, in this respect, should the U.S.S.R. differ from all other countries?

In the U.S.S.R., as I have shown, the "expulsion" of members means, in fact, exile. It is therefore more usual than elsewhere that any leading personality rather than accept "expulsion" and retire from activity into exile, will accept majority decisions against himself, and promise henceforth to carry out these decisions as a loyal worker in the Soviet State. But if such loyalty is not genuine, and if the individual concerned is not ready whole-heartedly to accept a decision against himself, he may continue his opposition. How can this be done?

Once a majority decision has been arrived at in the U.S.S.R. the people are not going to tolerate continual propaganda against this decision. Therefore, any sponsor of an unpopular policy knows that, after

democratic defeat, he will have to cease publicly to propagate his policy. Having no mass support, such a person may start loyally to work for the accepted policy or, determined to put his own leadership and policy across, whether the people want it or not, he may resort to underground means of trying to displace the existing leadership, and thus altering policy. In this way underground opposition activity by rejected leading personalities, people whom the democracy has turned down, is as possible in the U.S.S.R. as such open opposition is possible under capitalism by the expelled Socialists or Communists who become Fascist. It is also clear, I think, that any really democratic State must be ruthless in its treatment of such opposition by people who are rejected by the democracy, and therefore resort to other means of obtaining power in spite of the will of the people which has rejected them.

The vital fact which many people are unable to grasp about the U.S.S.R. to-day, whether they are spokesmen of the Press, the Government, or well-known trade union leaders like Sir Walter Citrine, is that in the U.S.S.R. the Government has the full support of the people. In capitalist countries the idea of a Government with the whole people behind it seems so strange that people are inclined to believe that such a thing is impossible. In the British trade union movement to-day, also, we can understand Sir Walter Citrine imagining that such a thing as a Labour movement in which leaders and rank and file are united is impossible. But let us have no illusions on this score. So long as the trade union movement is divided, it will be weak. And, once it is united on the basis of a real working-class policy, it too will have to fight

its enemy minorities and to use means of putting an end to their anti-working-class activities. The U.S.S.R. to-day stands out in the world as a country where people and Government are at one with each other; this is the great strength of the U.S.S.R.; but it is one of the things hardest to understand in a country torn by class antagonisms, and in a labour movement into which the influence of the possessing class has crept and dug itself well in.

Democracy, contrary to many illusory views, does not mean freedom of every kind. It means the rule of the people, and this means the suppression of the enemies of the people. Democracy, therefore, is also dictatorship, as far as concerns those who reject the decisions of the people and combat these decisions by every possible means. Soviet democracy, without discipline, would have led to the complete defeat of the Soviet State in 1918 to 1922. Democracy without discipline would have made the building up of the Red Army impossible. Democracy without discipline would have made the Five Year Plan an impossibility, for no great industrial progress could have been undertaken in conditions of anarchy. The U.S.S.R. to-day combines the features of real democracy for the people with the disciplined enforcement by the people of the decisions of this democracy. To the minority of property-owners such a system has always been a ruthless dictatorship, but this dictatorship has been in the interests of the vast majority of the people. It has, therefore, been essentially democratic.

"You say that in order to build our Socialist society we sacrificed personal liberty and suffered privation," said Stalin to the American correspondent Roy Howard. "But we did not build this society in order to

restrict personal liberty, but in order that the human individual may feel really free. We built it for the sake of real personal liberty, liberty without quotation marks. It is difficult for me to imagine what 'personal liberty' is enjoyed by an unemployed person who goes about hungry, and cannot find employment. Real liberty can exist only where exploitation has been abolished, where there is no oppression of some by others, where there is no unemployment and poverty, where a man is not haunted by the fear of being tomorrow deprived of work, of home, and of bread. only in such a society is real, and not paper, personal and every other liberty possible."

Such a liberty as described here by Stalin has had to be fought for, won, and has to be defended. But the defence of liberty is the suppression of its enemies. The defence of democracy, therefore, necessitates discipline over its opponents. Democracy for the people means discipline among the people and dictatorship over the enemies of the people.

PART III

A NEW DEMOCRACY

CHAPTER XVIII

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

WE HAVE DEFINED DEMOCRACY as government of the people, by the people, for the people. We must now ask what these words imply if a democratic system is to be really effective. What are the conditions in which it can be said that there really is government of, by, and for the people?

First and foremost, the people themselves must actively participate in the work of government, for only if they do this can any state really be a government of the people, and not a government over the people carried on by somebody else. Therefore, if government of the people by the people is really to exist, the people must be admitted to every branch of State administration, for otherwise there will automatically arise a separation of the governing authorities from the people which means that democracy will not be fully operative.

If the administration of any State is to be really accessible to the whole people, every administrative post must be open to all according only to the qualifications of citizens for fulfilling any particular job. But the qualifications of citizens are not something rigidly predetermined, but depend on the opportunities available for education and on the extent to which every citizen may qualify for responsible posts even

though, in the first instance, he was not qualified at all. In the interest of democracy, then, every citizen must have equal opportunities for education, and to qualify for all positions in the running of the State. All citizens must have the opportunity to develop their natural abilities to the full, and to use them in the most responsible positions.

If, in any society, certain citizens are barred from the right to participate in the work of government, as a result of such peculiarities as sex or nationality, then this is a limitation of democracy. A really effective democracy will make no distinction between its citizens on the ground of nationality or sex, and every one of them will have an equal right to participate in government according only to his qualifications for the job, qualifications which he will have an opportunity to develop if he has the necessary ability.

Since, in every present-day community, the use of force may be necessary in the interests of the majority and against the interests of antagonistic minorities or external enemies, it is likely, in every present-day democracy, that some form of army and police force will be inevitable. But if this army is to be representative of the people themselves, and not become isolated from the people whom it is supposed to defend, it must essentially be recruited from their own ranks, and its commanders as well as its ordinary soldiers must be really representative of the people of the democracy. For, if the officers of an army do not represent the people that this army is supposed to defend, there is absolutely no guarantee that the same thing may not occur as has occurred in Spain, that the generals of such an army will not revolt against the government of the people, and co-operate with the most anti-democratic foreign

States to suppress their own people and their own people's democratic government.

In the preservation of law and order within the country, also, a real democracy would ensure that the police and the judges were drawn from the people themselves, in order to be truly representative, for only then can the people be guaranteed justice.

Every real democracy will always give freedom to every nation to determine its own fate and its own form of government. The oppression of individuals because of their nationality, or of whole nations because they are in a minority in the territory of any State—or even in spite of the fact that they are the majority of the people coming under a particular Government—as happens in certain empires, cannot be justified on any democratic grounds whatever. A real democracy will not only give to majority nations within its territory the right to self-determination, but will secure for small nations also the right of self-government so long as such a right is not abused to the disadvantage of the community of nations as a whole.

The governing of the people by themselves necessitates, among other things, the complete equality of freedom of expression on the part of citizens. Not only must there be equality of opportunity to participate in the work of administration, but also in the expression of opinions about the work of government. Therefore the Press and the meeting-halls must be equally at the disposal of all citizens in a real democracy, and any limitation of the control of such things to the hands of a small class is a restriction of the democratic rights of the people.

We are very much inclined, particularly in Great Britain, to discuss questions of democracy as if they

concerned only the running of the State, without referring to the very important other activities in which the overwhelming majority of the people spend the greater part of their lives. In Britain the breadwinners of 90 per cent of the population make their livelihood by working for somebody else in institutions and firms owned by somebody else. In such places of work the employee is subject to the dictates of the employer from morning to night, and even the question of whether he shall continue in the same job to-morrow is something which the employer may decide without any reference whatever to the will of the worker concerned.

Therefore, in the economic life of this country to-day there is not the slightest pretence at democracy. Every employer has the right to run his own concern as he wishes, to take on and to discharge workers, and to impose such conditions of work as prove profitable to him. In his own factory every employer is boss, and the people who print the newspapers and run the railways, who work in the factories and toil in the mines, have not the slightest say in the way in which these organisations shall be run, or the workers treated. In their daily lives the vast majority of our people spend their time under the dictatorship of an employer, of a man who happens to possess the means of production with which others must work in order to make a living.

Any real democracy, quite apart from the control of the State itself, would have to give to the people the right to run all those organisations in which they spend their time and earn their living. This would mean that, so long as there were privately owned factories, the workers would have to be represented as well as the owner on the board of management; and,

for economic democracy to be really effective, the whole of the economic concerns of the country would have to be taken over by the democratic State or by co-operatives. In such circumstances it could be ensured that the people who worked in a concern would be directly represented on its management as workers, while, at the same time, responsibility for general administration would rest with a manager appointed by the State, and responsible to the democratic Government of the people themselves. Only in this way could democracy be introduced in economic life, and without democracy in economic life any talk of real democracy is to a great extent illusory.

I think that most readers will agree that the essential characteristics of a real democracy which are described here do not exist in Britain to-day. I think that, if they have read Parts I and II and not skipped to this part first, they will agree with me that such a democratic system does already exist in the U.S.S.R. But how does it come about that people who refer to Britain as a democracy often refer to the U.S.S.R. as a dictatorship, when we find that the real essentials of democracy exist in the U.S.S.R. and not in Britain.

It is true, of course, that in Britain to-day we enjoy very valuable democratic rights as compared with the peoples of Fascist countries. We may make speeches in any meeting-halls that we can afford to hire and that the owners will let us have, or in any streets where the police do not decide that we are causing an obstruction—other, that is, than outside a labour exchange, where such meetings have been banned by Lord Trenchard; we may publish literature if we can afford a printing press, so long as the police and the courts do not consider such matter to be obscene or seditious,

libellous or blasphemous; and we may form organisations as wage-earners, to force the employers to improve the conditions of their employees, though we may also get the sack for doing so. Further, when political parties whose active membership comprises about one-thousandth part of the population of the country offer us candidates at elections, we may choose between them or not choose at all. And, if we can persuade one of these political parties to put us up as a candidate at an election, and to finance our campaign for us, or if we are rich enough to finance ourselves and stand as "independents," we may stand for election to Parliament or local government. If, when elected, we decide not to fulfil the policy for which we were elected, this matter is our own affair until the next election! All these rights, it will be noted, include an element of democracy, and a non-democratic element. In so far as they represent democracy, such rights are to be defended and extended; in so far as they are limited, they fall short of the really effective democracy which we have outlined. The U.S.S.R. has introduced something new into democracy, because it has made democracy really effective in one respect after another in which, in other countries, it is still narrowly limited.

How does it come about that so many of the most loud-voiced supporters of democracy in Britain to-day, quite irrespective of their political affiliations, can denounce the U.S.S.R. and the Fascist States in one breath, while Britain alone, it would seem, stands proudly as the standard-bearer of democracy in a distracted world? How can we explain the fact that when examining the U.S.S.R. we found that from bottom to top, from the management of a factory or a block of flats to the administration of the President's

office itself, the people themselves are taking part in government, and yet such a system is condemned from 2,000 miles away as a dictatorship only rivalled in its viciousness by Fascism?

The answer lies in the existence of different conceptions of democracy itself. One conception, defining democracy in terms of certain traditional institutions which exist to-day, attacks all other systems as contrary to democratic principles. This is the orthodox defence of the British system at the present time. The other conception starts out with a study of the actual economic and social position of the people in society, and then asks to what extent they can or cannot be said to be governing themselves. And it must be admitted that, when the British system is approached in this way, though much preferable to a Fascist dictatorship, it appears to be anything but a system of effective democracy when compared with the situation existing in the Soviet Union. To take the economic life of the people alone, in Britain they play no part in running the concerns in which they spend a major part of their lives. They have to work under the dictates of a master, and the masters taken together only amount to a minute proportion of the total population.

Why, then, if in the economic life of the country there is such a dictatorship, do the people tolerate this state of affairs, having, as they do, a variety of democratic means of expressing opposition at their disposal? If the British State is democratic, then the people must have chosen to work daily for other people for wages and under conditions over which they have no control. Or is it, perhaps, that the extent of democracy is really so limited that the people have no opportunity through the State of effectively limiting the power of

the owners of the means of production? Certainly, so long as they believe that a highly limited democracy is really an effective system of democracy, they will not try to extend their democratic rights, but will be passive victims to every kind of encroachment. Therefore it is essential that the people appreciate the rôle of the property-owners in British democracy, a matter which we shall discuss in detail in the next chapter.

In general, so long as the factories and the mines, the newspapers and the meeting-halls, are privately owned, to such an extent also are the working people subject to a certain degree of dictatorship. The workman is told by the employer when he may earn a living, and under what conditions. And the working people as a whole, who cannot afford to own large newspapers and meeting-halls, are at the mercy of the continual propaganda of those who can. The extent of democracy is in this way limited in every community by the degree to which there exists the private ownership of the means of production, thus subjecting the working citizen to the dictatorship of an employer; and by the extent to which there is private ownership of the means of propaganda, thus subjecting the ordinary citizen to a perpetual bombardment of those ideas which the property-owners desire to propagate. Finally, as will be shown in the next chapter, in a a democratic State in which the means of production and propaganda are still in private hands, the State, too, is subject to the control of these property-owners to an overwhelming degree.

When we survey the world to-day we find that the extent to which effective democracy is enjoyed by the people varies from country to country. In Fascist countries, where there is an open terroristic dictatorship,

and the property-owners retain their power, we find that the workers and peasants who form the majority of the population are not allowed to combine their forces at all in order to fight for better conditions; they are forbidden to have their own newspapers or to hold their own meetings. The workers play absolutely no part in the running of the concerns in which they are employed, and they cannot even organise themselves in order to ensure that they will be paid a living minimum wage. To express their opinion, either of the employer or of the State, in a way which offends either of these, is a crime. Fascism thus completely destroys all vestiges of democracy. The democratic organisations of the people for improving their conditions of life are driven into illegality, and forced to take on a revolutionary form.

Fascist States combine an open dictatorship with the existence of private ownership of property concentrated in a few hands. In contrast to these countries, we have the democratic States in which, though the means of production are in private hands, and the means of propaganda are mainly so, the working people have the right to organise in trade unions, to hold meetings, and to publish their own newspapers in so far as they can afford to do so. If, in such countries, the workers can sufficiently well organise themselves, they can force the employers and the State to grant them better conditions of life. While such a system as this is vastly superior to Fascism, it still suffers very great shortcomings, for there is still nothing approaching real equality of rights for all citizens. Even under conditions of democratic government, so long as the means of production and propaganda are privately owned, the owners have always reserves of property which the

workers have not, and these reserves give an economic power in bargaining with the workers and a political power in propaganda, education, and in running the State, that can hardly be over-estimated.

Only when, as in the U.S.S.R. to-day, the means of production and propaganda are socially owned and controlled, is there no longer the domination of society by a small class that owns the property. In the U.S.S.R. no man owns a factory, and therefore no man can dictate to another man at will whether or not he shall have a job, and, if so, on what conditions. And, together with this, the socialisation of the meeting-halls and the newspapers has made the means of expression equally available to all, instead of being only at the disposal of private owners. In addition, in the running of the Soviet State the ordinary citizens are drawn into the work of administration, while universal suffrage is enjoyed by all without such things as property and residential qualifications which elsewhere favour the owners of property.

Democracy is not something absolute. A Fascist State may, in particular circumstances, make some concession to public opinion which gives an opportunity for the people to express their views on some matter which intimately affects them. Such a measure would be of value to the people as a step in the direction of democracy. It would be to their interest to use such a concession as a means for obtaining further concessions and further democratic rights. A democratic capitalist State may impose limitations of certain kinds on the power of the property-owners by laying down legislation for the protection of the working people, by setting limits to the amount of money which may be spent in elections, and so on. But a democratic

State may also curtail democracy, as, for example, in Britain, when Lord Trenchard banned the holding of meetings outside labour exchanges, or when, after the General Strike in 1926, the Government placed a number of restrictions on the rights of the working people to organise themselves and to unite their forces in a struggle for better conditions against the dictates of private property.

Every Fascist State includes in its population a majority of people who live by their own labour, and who will use every opportunity to wring better conditions of life from the property-owners. Because Fascism cannot kill the people who work, it cannot pluck out from its State those forces which continually demand expression—the democratic forces of the working people. The organisations of the people may be forced underground by a Fascist dictatorship, but they cannot be wiped out, for the people who make such a movement are the vast majority of the population, and the employers cannot live without them.

In the democratic State in which the power of the property-owners remains intact, tendencies towards greater or lesser democracy are both possible, according to the organised strength of the majority of the people on the one hand, and of the property-owning minority on the other. To the great property-owners the ideal State would be one in which the political rights of the workers were no more than their economic rights when working in the factory. For in such a State the property-owners could pursue whatever policy they desired without fear of opposition. Therefore the interests of the great property-owners are always bound up with the curtailment of democratic rights and with a tendency towards Fascism.

On the other hand, to the working people in every capitalist democracy any curtailment of the rights of the property-owners in favour of the workers represents a growth in democratic freedom. The extension of the right to hold street meetings and demonstrations can only benefit the working people, those who are least able to hire meeting-halls. The limitation of the rights of private individuals to use their newspapers for political purposes by greater working-class control over the Press can only benefit the working people—the majority of the population—and is, therefore, democratic. The replacing of property-owners by working men and women in the Civil Service, army, and law courts leads to a greater representation of the working people in the running of the State, and is a democratic measure. So, from the standpoint of the working people, the prospects of increasing their democratic rights are always present. The extent to which these opportunities are utilised depends on the degree to which the working people are aware of their position and organised to improve it. In the last analysis it is the relative strength of these two sections of the population that decides whether Fascism or democracy shall triumph, and, if democracy, the extent to which this democracy shall be made real by the limitation, and finally the complete annihilation, of the powers of property, economically and politically.

It would be a great error, however, to assume that any capitalist country consists only of workers and big employers. Actually, there is in most countries a considerable middle-class, consisting of small employers. These small employers, under present-day conditions, are continually menaced by the growth of monopoly, and are increasingly desirous of utilising all

democratic means of controlling the operations of the great property-owners. As a result, the small capitalists find themselves lining up with the democratic forces, with the working people, against the great monopolies and Fascism. In this fact of the present day lies the economic basis for a Popular Front, for Democracy and the small man, against Fascism and monopoly.

Perhaps the greatest danger, in Britain to-day, which faces the democratic forces, the vast majority of the population of the country, lies in the fact that the power of property in the British democratic system is grossly under-estimated in practically all public utterances on the matter. Therefore, bearing in mind all that we now know about the democracy of the U.S.S.R. let us turn to a short study of democracy in Britain to-day. Nowhere in the world could a better example be found of the power of property to utilise democracy for its own ends, thus rendering it almost ineffective as a weapon of the people of the country. Moreover, the ineffectiveness of democracy creates an acute danger of open dictatorship. For the less the people of the country realise the extent to which their democratic rights are already seriously limited, and threatened with still further limitations in the future, the more easily they may be induced to believe that democracy itself, rather than the imperfections of that democracy, is at fault when the system does not work satisfactorily for their interests.

CHAPTER XIX

DEMOCRACY AND PROPERTY

IN ORDER TO EXAMINE the relationship between democracy and property, no better example could be taken than Great Britain. For in Britain we possess a much-vaunted democratic system, and at the same time practically the whole of the property of the country is in the hands of a few people who live by employing labour, whilst the vast majority of the population have to work for someone else in order to make a livelihood. According to census figures, about 90 per cent of the people of Britain work for somebody else. The question of whether they shall be allowed to work or not is decided by an employer. The question of the conditions under which they work is decided by an employer. The rate of wages which they are paid is finally decided by an employer. And the employers in Britain to-day only amount to some 850,000 people. They and their families make up about 4 per cent of the population. So that, in their everyday working life, in everything which determines the security of their livelihood and their standard of life, about 90 per cent of the population of Britain are dependent on the will of about 4 per cent. Since the majority must work to live, they must accept work when it is going. And, as the owners of property have reserves at their disposal, they can always postpone taking on workers in order to obtain

terms which satisfy them. In so far as the workers organise in trade unions they can to some extent build up reserves and bargain for better conditions, but always, fundamentally, the owner of property has the advantage over the man who lives by his labour; for he has reserves of property on which to live, while the worker has very little on which to live unless he is drawing an income from selling his labour.

In the economic sphere in Britain to-day, 4 per cent of the population are masters or dictators, 90 per cent are servants. And the fact that the relationship of master to servant is also the relationship of property to poverty is illustrated by the figures of the distribution of the national income. The 90 per cent of the population that is dependent on its wages receives about 64 per cent of the national income. The 4 per cent of property-owners, plus about 6 per cent of independent workers, absorb annually about 36 per cent of the total national income. And, of these property-owners, a very few receive a tremendous income. It is estimated by Professor Bowley that just over 1 per cent of the population, the richest property-owners, received, in 1910, 30 per cent of the national income. On the other hand, 94½ per cent of the population received only 50 per cent of the national income.

The conclusion which we arrive at, after reading these figures, is that the class of the population that owns the factories, the coal-mines, the shops, and so on, is a small minority—but a wealthy minority. The majority of the population, on the other hand, work for this minority for a small income. The minority dictate to the majority when, where, and under what conditions they shall make a living. How does this affect the whole system of government of the country?

The supreme authority in Britain—which, by the way, unlike the U.S.S.R. has no written Constitution—is Parliament. The British Parliament consists of two Houses. The so-called "Upper House," the House of Lords, is not an elected body. It consists of the Peers of the Realm, who are appointed by the Crown, or happen to be the descendants of people who were at one time so appointed. It also includes the bishops. It represents, in fact, the wealthy section of the population, since working men do not become peers, while big landlords and employers do. The House of Lords is drawn from the small section of the community that owns property and employs labour, and not from the vast majority who own nothing and work for somebody else.

The fact that the House of Lords is not a democratic institution is generally admitted. It is even a thing which certain property-owners boast about. Professor Laski shows how, for example, "as early as 1906 Lord Balfour had told his supporters that it was their bounden duty to see that 'the great Unionist Party should still control, whether in power or in opposition, the destinies of this great Empire.' What he meant he revealed to the House of Commons three months later, when, on the third reading of the Liberal Government's abortive Educational Bill of 1906, he declared that 'the real discussion must be elsewhere.' It was an explicit claim for the right of property to rule the country whatever the will of the people, and no one who reads the utterances of eminent peers about that Budget can doubt that in their minds they felt entitled to safeguard themselves against any measure they might choose to regard as confiscatory. Mr. Asquith was right when he warned the electorate that implicit in the claim of the Lords was the threat of revolution. . . .

"There has been no essential change in the last twenty-five years. For the claim is still made that it is the function of the House of Lords to safeguard the country against a Labour Government which should seek to translate Socialist principles into terms of legislation; and all proposals made by the Conservative Party for the reform of the House of Lords have no end in view but to hinder such a Government from legislating in the way that is open to its rivals" (Laski, *The State in Theory and Practice*, pp. 275–6). The House of Lords exists to defend property against the majority of the population. The House of Lords, representing a small minority of the people, is a non-democratic body; and its policy, because of the interests which it represents, is anti-democratic.

But let us now consider the "Lower House," or House of Commons. This is the elected part of Parliament, *and is often claimed to be an effective means of* expressing the will of the people. Now, if the House of Commons is to express the will of the people effectively, there must exist in the country an equal right for all citizens to vote, to stand for election, to support their candidates effectively, and an equal right for all citizens, on the basis of merit only, to participate in the work of administration, of carrying out the decisions arrived at by the elected Parliament. Actually, as will be shown, not one of these conditions for a really democratic parliamentary system exists in Britain at the present time.

The right to be an elector in Britain to-day is enjoyed by every man and woman over the age of twenty-one, as contrasted with eighteen in the U.S.S.R., on condition that they can claim residence in a constituency for a period of not less than six months. If a citizen

can claim occupation of premises in two constituencies, he can enjoy a vote in each. A property-owner, therefore, has the right to two votes if he has property in two constituencies. Further, graduates of the Universities, who are in the main drawn from the employing class and highly paid salaried workers, have two votes at elections.

There are a number of constituencies where the majority of the inhabitants are wage-earners, and yet a majority of the votes can be obtained by the property-owners because they have factories and offices in those areas in sufficient numbers to out-vote the wage-earners living there. In local government, registration as a voter goes with the ownership or renting of residential or office property, and *there is no limit to the number of votes which one person may exercise in a series of constituencies.* To be considered an occupier, for local government elections, persons must furnish the premises which they occupy. As a result, those who live on premises furnished by someone else have no vote. These people, in general, are wage-earners.

It is true, as far as numbers are concerned, that the total extra votes going to the propertied classes in this way is not large, and cannot outweigh the working-class influence in the country as a whole. *On the other hand, it is of significance* as a matter of principle, for it brings out vividly the fact that the existing system of election is based, not on citizenship as in the U.S.S.R., but on the ownership of property.

In theory, every person who has the right to vote also has the right to stand for election, if nominated by eight electors. The right of anybody to stand for election, however, is deceptive, for two reasons. First, in the case of parliamentary elections every candidate

must deposit £150, which is forfeited if he does not obtain a certain number of votes. Secondly, to stand for election necessitates an election campaign—that is, the effective supporting of candidates by propaganda. The Labour Party, which is not likely to make extravagant estimates on this score, considers that, in addition to the £150 deposit, which may be returned to the candidate, an additional expenditure of at least £500 is necessary to contest a parliamentary seat. A total of £650 must be laid out. It is clear that a small number of rich citizens are in a position to put up candidates in all the parliamentary seats in the country without any great material sacrifice. The vast majority of the population, however, consists of wage-earners, who must pool their meagre resources at considerable sacrifice in order to run candidates.

There are about 600 seats in the House of Commons. There are about 100,000 super-tax payers in the country, with an income of over £2,000 a year. Each one of these people could finance a candidate out of his annual income, and still have £1,200 to live on. Each of these individuals could afford, at his own expense, to contest a constituency. On the other hand, of the 19 million wage-earners, the average wage is not more than £2 5*s*. a week, or £117 a year. It would, therefore, take a working man—one of the 19 million wage-earners—the total earnings of four years to finance himself, or someone else, as a parliamentary candidate. So the right to stand for election, and to carry out the necessary publicity campaign for a candidate, is enjoyed by the small class of property-owners *to an enormous degree* compared with the majority of the population, the wage-earners.

But it must not for one moment be thought that the

work of moulding public opinion, and of preparing a state of mind that is likely to support a particular type of parliamentary or municipal candidate, is created simply by means of an election campaign. The creation of this public opinion goes on, day by day, in every public expression of opinion that reaches the eyes and ears of the people.

In Britain we still enjoy freedom of speech. But freedom of speech, to mean anything, must be effective freedom—*of speech that reaches the people*. The degree of freedom of effective speech in Britain to-day depends entirely on the possession of wealth. The most powerful means of influencing public opinion is the Press. In Britain, "anyone" can start a newspaper, so long as it is not "obscene," "blasphemous," "seditious," or "libellous." But the cost of printing and publishing a newspaper is vastly greater than the cost of running an election campaign. It is so great that only the very richest individuals and groups of individuals as a rule can afford to own newspapers. It is so great that no ordinary daily paper could support itself without its revenue from advertisements, which are supplied by firms which have sufficient capital to be able to advertise. Our freedom of the Press is, therefore, mainly freedom of property-owners who are rich enough to finance the newspapers, and in this way to influence the thought of the whole population of the country. Taken as a whole, the Press represents the property-owners.

We must not, however, leave the matter at this point without drawing the necessary distinction between British conditions to-day and those of a Fascist State. In a Fascist State the workers are not permitted to run newspapers even if they can afford it. In Britain

they are permitted to do so, and do so to a small degree. But shortage of capital, the fact that capitalist firms are unwilling to support workers' papers with advertisements—the main source of revenue to the ordinary Press—and a boycott of the sale and distribution of working-class literature, make the difficulties of the workers' Press extremely great as compared with the Press of the well-to-do. Only in 1926, when the workers throughout the country practically ceased to print the capitalist newspapers, and at the same time the Trades Councils and other workers' organisations published their own bulletins, were there a few days when the Press of Britain was almost entirely a Press controlled by the organisations of the working class, the majority of the population. But even then the radio remained in Government hands, and was fully utilised on the side of the employers.

As with the Press, so with the ownership of the great meeting-halls of the country, and with the control of the radio. The trustees of the Albert Hall do not let it to everyone who can pay the rent. Even if a workers' organisation is able to pay, it may not be allowed the use of the hall if the owners do not approve of the purpose of the meeting. Sir Oswald Mosley could on one occasion obtain the use of the hall, while it was refused to a working-class organisation shortly afterwards.

And now, having seen how the means of influencing public opinion, the means of effective propaganda, are in the hands of the minority of property-owners, let us come to the further problem—that of an elected Government which really represents the will of the wage-earners, if all the other obstacles have been overcome and such a majority has been returned to Parliament.

It should be clear that, whatever the majority in Parliament may be, any decisions of Parliament under the present system must be carried out by the Civil Service. Unless, therefore, this Civil Service is organically connected with the wage-earning majority of the population, it may show reluctance, and actually be guilty of sabotage, in carrying out the decisions of such a parliamentary majority.

But, before considering the Civil Service, one other point should be touched upon. This is the question of Education. For we have seen that a real equality between citizens, to vote and to be elected, to hold responsibility in every walk of life, and to rule themselves, depends on their having equal opportunities to develop their abilities to the full. In Britain to-day, however, they have not got this equality. For, according to R. H. Tawney, " the proportion of children leaving the elementary schools, who enter what have hitherto been known as secondary schools, is, in England and Wales as a whole, less than one-seventh, and in some areas less than one-tenth, while some three-quarters of them have hitherto entered full-time wage-earning employment at the age of fourteen " (*Equality*, p. 90). About 90 per cent of the workers have no schooling over the age of fourteen. On the other hand, the children of the well-to-do do not go to the ordinary State elementary or secondary schools at all, but pass through an entirely different and very expensive system of private education, known, ironically enough, as the " public schools." And we find that it is this small minority that passes through the " public schools " that commands practically all the leading positions in the social and economic life of the country and in the Civil Service.

"The evidence presented by Mr. Nightingale, who has made a statistical analysis of the social antecedents of the personnel of the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service between 1851 and 1929, suggests that this statement is true of a more recent period. Sixty per cent of it, he shows, has been drawn from the eleven most exclusive public schools, while of the remaining 40 per cent, well over one half attended the lesser public schools, received a military or naval education, or were educated privately or abroad. 'The unchallengeable conclusion that emerges . . . is that the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service have been a preserve for the sons of the aristocratic, *rentier*, and professional classes'" (op. cit., pp. 93–4). And, though possibly not quite so marked, this selection for the Civil Service from the small minority of the population that owns property, those who can afford an expensive "public school" education, is universal throughout. Remember that Lord Trenchard's famous "reform" of the police force included the recruiting of more ex-public-school boys for its leading ranks. Similar efforts have been made to build up a public-school air force in recent years; and the "defence of the country" (and possibly of the rights of property against the people of the country) is also in the hands, not of representatives of the people, but of the products of Wellington and Sandhurst, the sons of those who can afford a "public school" education.

The whole Civil Service is so recruited that we have government, not by the people, but by the property-owners and their relatives. In addition, all those professions which are of particular importance to the security of property, we find, are recruited from the same small section of the population. "In the year

1926, 71 out of 80 bishops and deans for whom information is available, 139 out of 181 members of the judicial profession, 152 out of 210 highly placed members of public departments, 63 out of 88 members of the Indian Civil Service and Governors of Dominions, and 99 out of 132 directors of banks and railways, had been educated at public schools" (op. cit., pp. 94–5). The Civil Service, which has to carry out the decisions of Parliament; the bishops, who, like the Press, influence the opinion of the public; the judges; the railway directors and bank directors, together with the members of the legal profession,—are almost entirely drawn from one small class of the population. Not only, then, do the owners of the factories and mines run their own factories and mines, but they and their class may well be said to run the whole country as well.

With the property-owners running the Civil Service and the professions, having all the means at their disposal for broadcasting their ideas to the whole population, and the wealth necessary to hire or own the meeting-halls and newspapers, it is not surprising to find that the work of Government itself remains in the hands of these people. R. H. Tawney writes: "The association of political leadership with birth and wealth is a commonplace of English history; but it is not always realised how little that association was weakened after the advent of what is usually regarded as the age of democracy." Professor Laski, in his instructive analysis of British Cabinets between 1801 and 1924, has shown that, for nearly two generations after the Act of 1867 had enfranchised the urban working classes, the greater part of the business of government continued, nevertheless, to be conducted by a small group of owners of great properties, who

were enabled by their economic advantages and social connections to step into the exercise of political power with a facility impossible to ordinary men. Of 69 Ministers who held office between 1885 and 1905, 40 were sons of nobility, 52 were educated at Oxford and Cambridge, and 46 were educated at public schools; while, even between 1906 and 1916, 25 out of 51 Ministers were sons of nobility" (op. cit., p. 92).

A further limitation of British democracy must now be mentioned. It has already been shown how a small class of property-owners dominates elections, dominates Governments, and dominates the Civil Service. Figures have also been cited to show how the directors of the banks, the railways, and, of course, the armament firms, are also all drawn from the same small class of the community. Therefore, any Government that is ever elected under existing conditions is likely, as a result of all the political influence of property, to represent only to a comparatively small degree the real interests of the majority of the population of the country, the working people. If, in any situation, such a Government is returned to Parliament, pledged to a policy in the interests of the working people, of socialism, and real democracy, then numerically this representation will not do justice to the real interests which it represents, since all the propaganda and social influences are working for the under-representation of such interests.

Once in power, such a Government would have to face up to the fact that the leading ranks of the Civil Service were against it. And sabotage by the Civil Service, even to the point of armed rebellion by the military leaders, as in Spain, is no small menace. But, in addition, such a Government would have to

face the active opposition of the property-owning class, as personified in the bank directors, railway directors, and factory-owners throughout the country. And the power of these people over any Government is tremendous, because they can threaten completely to hold up the economic life of the country if their demands are not satisfied. The bankers in the world to-day, though competing amongst themselves, can combine their forces to bring pressure to bear upon the most important Governments. They can move funds from one country to another, and cause financial crises. They can force elected Governments to resign.

In our discussion of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. we saw that the Supreme Council, directly elected by the people, is being given increased powers, whereas the powers of its Presidium are very strictly limited. It should be noted here that in Britain precisely the opposite tendency is operating—a tendency for Parliament, dominated by the parties representing the property-interests, to delegate its authority to small groups who become directors in their own sphere. In this respect "Orders in Council" play an important part.

In his *General Strike*, R. Page Arnot writes:

"Let us turn to the form of government known as King in Council. Its origin and history are still a subject of investigation, but at one time the King in his Privy Council appeared to be about to supplant the Parliament. . . . During the Napoleonic Wars, the Privy Council was once more used as a formidable engine of government, and, by the famous Orders in Council, Pitt and his successors were able to meet Napoleon with swift and arbitrary decrees. After the Napoleonic Wars, the position of the form of government known

as the King in Council had been clearly defined, and it was possible to regard it as a reserve instrument to meet great occasions.

"Of these, the greatest occasion was the outbreak of war in 1914. The declaration of war was followed by the passing of the Defence of the Realm Act, by the first clause of which power was given to His Majesty in Council to take the necessary measures to secure the safety of the realm. These powers, primarily exercised through the Privy Council in the shape of Orders in Council, were transferable to each Government Department; which thus acquired the power to legislate by the simple method of publishing its regulation in the *London Gazette*" (p. 12).

After the war the Defence of the Realm Act was replaced by an Emergency Powers Act by which, in a "state of emergency," Orders in Council would automatically become law. In this way any parliamentary majority can in fact institute an open dictatorship if it wishes to do so—that is, if it ever finds it expedient to declare a "state of emergency." Such a state is likely to be declared primarily in connection with labour difficulties.

It is not often realised by the ordinary person that in Britain laws can be made also by the judges. There are two kinds of law in Britain: Statute Law—consisting of Acts of Parliament; and Case Law, consisting of all the decisions of the judges on the interpretation of these laws in actual cases that have arisen. If, in a particular case, a judge interprets the law in a particular way, this case then becomes a precedent, and the interpretation itself becomes law. Since the judges are, as has been seen, drawn from the ranks of the small minority of property-owners, such "interpretations"

of the law naturally tend to operate in the interests of property in any circumstance that arises.

In concluding this examination of the power of the property-owners in the British State—and Britain is not untypical of those democratic States where the private ownership of the means of production and of propaganda remains unchecked—it is worth pointing out that for the British Empire as a whole the degree of democracy existing in Britain is far from typical. In describing the Soviet State, we saw how every nation enjoys the right to self-determination, and how there is complete equality of every nation within the Union. In the British Empire, on the contrary, the democratic rights of the inhabitants of Great Britain are not shared by the far greater population of India. Not only within the British Empire have we not got the rule of the nation which has a majority of the population, which is India; but we have the actual subjection of that nation so that its people enjoy no greater democracy than did the people of Tsarist Russia. When, therefore, we draw comparisons between the power of property in Britain and the new democracy of the U.S.S.R., let us not forget that property behaves comparatively democratically in Britain itself, and the situation of the Indian and other peoples under British rule is far more akin to the lot of the peoples of the Tsarist Empire.

Enough has now been said to establish the relationship between private property and democracy. When we recall the situation existing in the U.S.S.R. at the present time, and compare it with Britain, we see that every democratic feature of the Soviet system that would be new to Britain is a derivative of one fact—the abolition of the power of property.

When, in early 1918, the Russian printing presses were transferred from the hands of their private owners to the organisations of the working people, this act symbolised all that the Soviet system stands for in opposition to the democracy of capitalism. But even under capitalism the limit to the enjoyment of democratic rights by the people is not rigidly fixed. In 1926 for a few days during the General Strike the British printing workers refused to issue the main newspapers of the country, while the Trades Councils and other workers' organisations poured out news bulletins on a scale never exceeded before or since. In those few days Britain had a Press which predominantly represented the working people, and which, for a short and exceptional period, did not represent the views of a handful of rich Press lords.

In the year 1920, when the British Government was preparing to declare open war on the Soviet Government of Russia, the workers set up Councils of Action throughout the country with the slogan "Hands off Russia!" The democratic demands of the working people were put forward so forcibly that the Government, though utterly unsympathetic, was forced to take notice, and armed intervention against the Soviets was brought to an end. In the same year, in a speech in Russia, Lenin said: "The whole of the English bourgeois Press wrote that the Councils of Action were Soviets. And it was right. They were not called Soviets, but in actual fact they were."

In Britain, as in Russia, the workers have always the possibility, by uniting their forces and fighting for better conditions, to restrict the disproportionate might of the property-owners, and thus to introduce more and more effective democracy. If we look back at the

Russian Revolution we find that the Soviets actually seized power only when they were faced with two clear alternatives: either a military dictatorship, instituted by the owners of the land, the factories, and the mines; or the seizure of power by the most powerful organisations of the people, the Soviets, and the suppressing of the power of the property-owners in the interests of real democracy.

While, in Britain to-day, it is perfectly true that any elected Government of the people may be blackmailed by the bankers and sabotaged by the Civil Service if these representatives of the property-owners do not approve of its policy, it is equally true that any Government which represents the interests of the property-owners may be prevented from carrying out an anti-working-class policy by the direct action of the working people themselves. The fact that the bankers and Civil Servants operate to-day behind the scenes to ensure that official policy shall be in the interests of property is all the more reason why the working people must act in an organised way to force the Government and the bankers and the Civil Servants to act more favourably to the people. And, so soon as the working people of the country are organised in such a way as to force their will on a property-owners' Government, or on property-owners that oppose a people's Government, they are beginning to make democracy more real and more effective.

In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx says: "The first step in the workers' revolution is to make the proletariat the ruling class, to establish democracy." This was the task which the Soviet Revolution in Russia set out to fulfil, and it has not been unsuccessful. But the democracy of to-day has only been won as a result of a

united struggle by the whole people. The new democracy only survived because it had the united support of the workers and peasants of the various nationalities within the country, coupled with the support of the working people of other countries. The fact that it has survived for twenty years means that others can learn from its example. To-day the actual experience of the 170 million people that inhabit one-sixth of the earth has shown how real democracy can be, once the power of private property is finally broken. The inhabitants of the U.S.S.R. are proving in practice that the workers can rule themselves, and raise their living standards, without the help of the employers, whereas, on the other hand, the property-owners can never live without the forces of the working people, the forces making for real democracy and liberty. In this lies the guarantee of the ultimate victory of democracy over property.

CHAPTER XX

DEFENDING AND EXTENDING DEMOCRACY

IN THE YEAR 1922, when the Treaty of Union was signed between the Soviet Republics as a means of mutual support and defence against a hostile world, the following declaration was issued by the Governments concerned:

"Since the formation of the Soviet Republics the world has been divided into two camps—the capitalist and the Socialist.

"In the capitalist camp reigns national hostility and inequality, colonial slavery, chauvinism, national suppression, pogroms, and imperialist brutality.

"Here, in the Socialist camp, is to be found mutual confidence and peace, national freedom and equality, and the tranquil community and fraternal co-operation of peoples. The attempt of the capitalist world through long decades to settle the problem of nationalities by the joint methods of the free development of peoples, and the exploitation of man by man, has proved to be fruitless. On the contrary, the skein of nationalist contradictions is becoming more and more entangled, and threatens to overwhelm capitalism itself. The bourgeoisie has proved incapable of bringing about the co-operation of nations.

"Only in the camp of the Soviets, and under the

proletarian dictatorship round which is rallied the majority of the population, has it been found possible to root out national persecution, to create conditions for mutual trust, and to lay the foundations of fraternal co-operation."

These words were written in 1922, but how true they prove to be to-day! The Soviets came to power in Russia in 1917, when it had become clear to the people that this was the only way to peace and democracy. It was the only way to prevent a military dictatorship and the continuation of an imperialist war. "Peace, Bread, and Land," was the main slogan of the Russian Revolution.

When, at the present time, we survey the world, we find that it is still divided into two camps. But the tremendous growth of the power of the country of Socialism on the one hand, and the seizure of power by *Fascist dictatorships representing the most reactionary* property interests on the other, has modified the frontier between these camps. Peace and democracy were the main aims of the Soviet Revolution. To-day, in the capitalist world itself, two camps have been formed, for peace and democracy on the one hand and for Fascism and war on the other. In the present world situation all the forces of peace and democracy are centring their attention on an alliance with the U.S.S.R. and Socialism; the forces of Fascism look upon the U.S.S.R. as the main menace to their continued existence, because its example can never be effectively hidden for long from the people of all countries, and this is a stimulus to renewed activity in the interests of democracy.

The main dividing-line, then, in the present world situation, is between the forces of democracy and those

of Fascism. What are the reasons for this change in emphasis which has taken place in the post-war period?

The important feature of post-war capitalism, long ago foreseen as inevitable by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*, has been the growing power of the great financial and industrial monopolies and the concentration of wealth in the hands of these monopolists. Such a tendency in economic organisation causes an ever-increasing number of the small producers, whether or not they employ a few workers, to feel themselves at the mercy of the great trusts, and to desire to use every political means to control these great organisations.

As a result, sections of the middle class that at one time considered themselves superior to the workers, tend to become willing to co-operate with the working people in limiting the power of the great trusts. Thus, the forces of democracy on the one hand are numerically increased, while, on the other, the great trusts and monopolies use every means of increasing their control of the State, if necessary, by even putting an end to every legal form of democratic expression.

Fascism, then, appears as the expression in politics of the growing tendency to monopoly in economics. Those of the employing class who find themselves being impoverished and increasingly insecure as a result of the operations of the great monopolies tend to move in the direction of the working class, both economically and politically. In this way the great monopolies and their fascist tendencies are opposed by the working people and a growing section of the middle class, the main constituents of a Popular Front.

In Spain these forces are to-day in open conflict. The cause of this conflict is that the people, as a

result of uniting their forces in the cause of democracy, succeeded in electing a really democratic Government to power, a Government pledged to take a number of democratic measures against the interests of property, and in the interests of the people. The big property-owners, together with the generals in the army drawn from the propertied class, and with the support of foreign Fascism, launched their offensive on the Spanish people in a last desperate attempt to prevent the democratic forces from becoming effective. The result has been the "civil war," a war of international Fascism against the Spanish people.

When, in relation to Spain, it is claimed that the Government did not really represent the people because it only received a minority of the votes at the last election, this is sheer deception. First, it is untrue that the parties fighting for the Spanish Government against the rebels received a *minority* of the votes. They received a majority. But General Franco still insists on referring to the Basque Nationalists as a party of the Right, though it has actually consistently supported the Government. But, secondly, even if there had been a majority of votes for the parties of the Right, this does not for one moment mean that there was a majority for the armed uprising of General Franco and his foreign Fascist supporters.

The second point, however, which is relevant, is the fact that, as in Britain to-day, the last election in Spain took place in a country where the main means of production and propaganda were still privately owned. Therefore the property-owners had all those advantages which we have shown to be inconsistent with really effective democracy. In such conditions the votes for the popular front were bound to understate, not to

overstate, the real interests which this group of parties represented. When, in addition, it is realised that the elections took place with considerable pressure from the Government, which then consisted of the parties of the Right, against the Popular Front, we see that all the forces operating in Spain, other than the demands of the people themselves, militated to minimise the Popular Front vote.

The Spanish Popular Front Government was returned in spite of all these disabilities of the people in the elections. If there had been real equality of propaganda, the votes for the Government would have been more, not less. Then came the Franco rebellion, backed by foreign Fascist States. The Spanish Government, though at that time consisting of Liberal republicans, armed the whole people. The fight for democracy in Spain caused a Liberal Government to do what only the Soviets had done in Russia—to take the vitally democratic step of putting arms into the hands of the people themselves. From that moment onwards on Government territory the scales were tipped in favour of real democracy; for, once the people themselves have arms, they can express their will more effectively than ever before. The example of Spain shows that, in the present world situation, the fight to defend democracy is also the fight to extend it. Democracy cannot be defended to-day without being extended. And, in every country, a development is taking place either towards greater democracy and the limitation of the rights of property, or to less democracy and Fascist dictatorship.

In this situation the Soviet Union stands out as a beacon. It shows the logical conclusion of the struggle to make democracy effective. At first, in this struggle,

concrete steps had to be taken to limit the rights of the property-owners in order to make democracy real for the vast majority of the people. And then the people started to plan production and produce without the mines and land being any longer privately owned. They could, in fact, only introduce a planned system when the land and means of production were already public property. They have established real democracy by completely abolishing class relationships, so that every citizen is a servant of the community, and, as a citizen, also a master.

To-day in the Soviet Union there is work for all, and equality of opportunity for all. Every adult citizen has the same economic and political rights, and no citizen, however much personal property he may own, can regulate the lives and livelihoods of others as a result of this ownership. I may have money in the U.S.S.R. to-day if I have earned it, but I cannot own a factory as a result, and I cannot tell people whether or not they shall have work, and at what wages, and for what hours, because I happen to own some money. My money cannot be used to give me any kind of say in the economic life of the country. And, though I may possess money, I cannot use it for propaganda purposes. I cannot own a newspaper or a meeting-hall, and I cannot even hire a meeting-hall for private political purposes. Therefore my money does not give me any political power whatever. As a result of this, power in the U.S.S.R., economically and politically, is vested in the citizens as such, according only to their abilities, and with no relationship whatever to their material possessions. In this way democracy has become real, and really effective. This is something new in the history of democracy.

It would be absolutely incorrect, however, to assume, because in the U.S.S.R. to-day a degree of democracy has been achieved such as exists nowhere else in the world, that there is no further democratic development possible for the U.S.S.R. For the Soviet Union is continually developing, and there are no limits to the way in which, in the future, Soviet democracy may not be further and further extended. Even to-day, Soviet citizens still receive wages according to their work. There are, therefore, highly and lowly paid workers. Even to-day, workers must to some extent still specialise on particular jobs, so that there are cultural workers, administrative workers, technical workers, and unskilled workers. While there is equal opportunity for all citizens to advance from any of these categories to a higher one, there is still the need for a certain degree of specialisation, and for a certain material encouragement to each citizen to work according to his ability, and to develop his abilities to the full.

The present state of Soviet society—Socialism—is not regarded in the U.S.S.R. as any kind of Utopia or final achievement. It is considered only as a stage in development towards Communist society, which will be a still more real democracy for the whole people. Writing in the 1870's, Karl Marx, on whose studies of human society Bolshevik doctrine is based, wrote of the future:

"In a higher phase of Communist society, after the tyrannical subordination of individuals according to the distribution of labour, and therefore also the distinction between manual and intellectual work, have disappeared, after labour has become not only a means to live, but is itself the first necessity of living,

after the powers of production have also increased and all the springs of co-operative wealth are gushing more freely together with the all-round development of the individual, then, and then only, can the narrow bourgeois horizon of rights be left far behind, and society will inscribe on its banner 'From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need'" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*).

In these words Marx showed that beyond the democracy of Soviet society to-day there is a perspective of still further development and still greater personal freedom, until needs and not work will determine what share every citizen shall receive of the total production. And the process by which such a state of society will be reached includes the emancipation of every worker, not only by making him the equal of his neighbour, but by making work itself so interesting that it is voluntarily undertaken by all, so that no longer the compulsion of law and material want will be necessary in order that every citizen do his share. "Productive labour," wrote Engels in 1878, "will become a means to their emancipation, by giving each individual the opportunity to develop and exercise all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions; in which, therefore, productive labour will be a pleasure instead of a burden" (*Anti-Dühring*, p. 328).

Such a system of society will be run like a well-organised household. People will work as producers voluntarily, and they will help themselves from the common product. Shops will take the form of depots, from which people will take what they need, and, when the general poverty of capitalism no longer exists, and a love of labour has developed, there is no reason to suppose that, under such conditions, anyone

would want to appropriate more than was necessary for a reasonable standard of life.

Once such conditions have been established internationally, the State as such—as a means of guaranteeing security to the people who have power against class enemies within the community or warlike enemies outside—will no longer be necessary. For, once the people are governing their own institutions from top to bottom, and there are no enemies of the people trying to destroy such a free self-governing community, there is no need to defend such a system by organised force, by the State. Under such conditions the whole apparatus of the State, with its armed forces, will, as Marx put it, "wither away."

The Soviet State as it exists to-day is, therefore, by no means the final form which democracy will take when the power of property is once and for all abolished, not only in one great country, but throughout the world. So long as the Soviet State stands alone, and is continually threatened by Fascist States outside and agents of Fascism within—and the Soviet State cannot build such a Chinese Wall of isolation to prevent some of them getting in—it will continue to be a fighting organisation of the people, it will be armed, and it will have to use every means of securing its own defence. As a democratic organisation that may at any time have to fight for its existence, the Soviet State must be highly disciplined, like a trade union in a strike, and the majority will use every necessary means of enforcing such a discipline.

But as, in the rest of the world, the forces of democracy triumph over the concentrated power of the great owners of property, the danger to Soviet democracy will be reduced and the whole world will move nearer

to a state in which real democracy will be freed from the danger of aggression. In such circumstances we may look towards a world democratic community, in which the people who work shall rule, and in which, because all shall do their share of work, all shall do their share of ruling.

In 1919 the workers of Hungary set up a Soviet State which survived for several months in the face of almost overwhelming opposition. But finally, as a result of armed intervention from outside, the Hungarian Soviet Republic was suppressed and Fascist terror took its place. The Republic had lasted for four months. The Hungarian democratic writer, Jaszi, summing up the results of the experience of the Soviet Republic, wrote these words:

"The most important effect of the proletarian dictatorship will certainly be found in the radical change of outlook produced among the proletarian masses. It had the character of a violent moral explosion in the Hungarian social order. It planted in the minds of the great mass of semi-brutalised slaves perhaps the first seeds of faith and hope of liberation. To this day there lives in the hearts of millions the sense of the rights of the workers and of their superiority to the drones and idlers. Above all, the dictatorship shook out of their age-long apathy the unhappy helots of Hungarian society, the agricultural workers.

"No less important was the service of the Soviet Revolution to the idea of internationalism, made vivid and real in the minds of the people by the memory of hard and bloody conflicts.

"Finally, through the spirit of the Soviet constitution, despite much childish naïveté and many violent outbursts, the Republic did pioneer work for the

ideals of more advanced types of democracy and self-government. It did this by its exposure of the defective organisation, the shortcomings and hypocrisies of the bourgeois democracies of to-day, and its proclamation for all time of the ideal of the State, in which only those who work and produce shall have the right to control and govern society" (*Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary*, p. 151).

This epitaph was written of the Hungarian Soviet Republic by one who was a democrat but not a Communist. It was written of the Hungarian Soviet Republic that only lived for four months. How much greater, then, is the significance to democracy of the Soviet State that has lived for twenty years, and in which the democratic rights of the people are constantly being extended. Finally, what a prospect for the world as a whole opens up before us, when the people of every country, as a result of an organised struggle for democratic rights in countries where they are deprived of them to-day, and through the defence and extension of these rights where they are already to some extent enjoyed, have established in every country a society in which all citizens have equal rights as citizens, and economic and political power no longer to the slightest extent depend on the possession of property.

The way to such a society, the world commonwealth of the future, is indicated by the U.S.S.R. And in that society the State itself, and even the word democracy, will become historical terms with no longer any significance. "For," as Lenin puts it, "when *all* have learned to manage, and independently are actually managing by themselves, social production, keeping accounts, controlling the idlers, the gentlefolk, the swindlers, and similar 'guardians of capitalist tradi-

tions,' then the escape from this national accounting and control will inevitably become so increasingly difficult, and such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are men of practical life, not sentimental intellectuals, and they will scarcely allow anyone to trifle with them), that very soon the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of everyday social life in common will have become a *habit*.

"The door will then be open for the transition from the first phase of Communist society to its higher phase, and along with it to the complete withering away of the State. . . . The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it begins to be unnecessary. The more democratic the 'State' consisting of armed workers, which is 'no longer a State in the proper sense of the word,' the more rapidly does *every* State begin to wither away" (*State and Revolution*).

In these words Lenin outlines the future of Soviet democracy—a community of citizens, governing themselves in every branch of social activity, and using the necessary measures to preserve discipline in the common interest. Democracy and written Constitutions in such a society will probably be as unnecessary as in the ordinary family, and the citizens will run their community peacefully and in the common interest, creating all the necessary means of livelihood with their common labour, and having ever greater resources available for the arts and sciences, for the complete mastery of nature in the interests of humanity.

"Will this new civilisation," write Sidney and Beatrice Webb, of the U.S.S.R. to-day, "with its abandonment of the incentive of profit-making, its

extinction of unemployment, its planned production for community-consumption, and the consequent liquidation of the landlord and the capitalist, spread to other countries? Our own reply is: 'Yes, it will.' But how, when, where, with what modifications, and whether through violent revolution or by peaceful penetration, or even by conscious imitation, are questions we cannot answer" (*Soviet Communism*, p. 1143).

But the answer to these final questions is not a difficult one. We have seen that the essential feature of the Soviet system is the abolition of the power of the landlord and capitalist, the owner of property, to rule the productive life of the country and thus to dominate the State. But this is but the extension of democracy so as to wipe out all privileges of the great property-owners as against the ordinary citizen, the small producer, the ordinary working man or woman. The united struggle of all the forces in the world interested in defending democratic liberties against encroachment, and in extending these liberties beyond the limits set by the great property-owners at the present time, is the only way in which democracy and democratic peace can be preserved in face of the growing danger of Fascism and Fascist aggression. The logical process of such a struggle, at a certain point, will necessitate the complete expropriation of the property-owners and the replacement of capitalism by Socialism, the only final guarantee that the anti-democratic forces of property can never again rear their heads. Whether or not, in Britain or France or Spain, such a struggle takes the actual form of the setting up of Soviets, it is in essence the same struggle as that which the Russian people successfully fought in 1917.

"Peace, Bread, and Land" was the slogan of the Russian Revolution; and a really democratic Government was the only way by which these aims could be achieved. The Soviets were, in Russia, the democratic organ of the people. When, in November 1917, the whole of the democratic liberties of the Russian people were threatened with suppression, and with the imposition from above of a military dictatorship, the workers and peasants of Russia seized complete power through their own organisations, the Soviets. Democracy was triumphant, and the military dictators and their foreign allies were driven from the country. The seizure of power by the Russian Soviets was a landmark in the history of democracy, for it has proved for all time the practicability of the principle that only those who work and produce shall have the right to govern society. And it has shown that in a really democratic society it is possible to ensure that every citizen shall work and produce.

We began this book with a few remarks on the nature of democracy and dictatorship. At that stage we were interested in making clear one thing only—that democracy and dictatorship are not mutually exclusive terms. Any democracy for one group of people may simultaneously be a dictatorship over another. The shareholders' meeting of a joint-stock company is democratic for the shareholders, but it is a dictatorship over the employees of the firm, who usually vastly outnumber the shareholders. So, too, in the capitalist State, the democratic rights which exist are in practice available to the few owners of property to a great extent as compared with the majority of the people—the people who work. Thus, as in the Greek city-state, though to a lesser degree, we may say that

even in Britain to-day the really effective part in the running of the country is played by a "charmed circle of the privileged," while the rest of the community —the people who do the work—"have no voice whatever in the making of the laws under which they toil."

Democracy and dictatorship are not mutually exclusive. They are not absolutes. Therefore, in facing the practical problems of the people of the world as a whole, or of any single country, it is essential in every concrete instance to consider the actual situation, not from the standpoint of law only, but of everyday practice, in order to know to what extent the people are governing themselves, and to what extent they are not. On this basis, every measure which curtails the power of the people must be fought by every means that they can command, and every method of increasing their democratic rights, of making democracy more effective, must be constantly utilised.

The defence of democracy against Fascism means the extension of existing democratic rights against those limitations imposed by the property relationships in existing society. And every extension of democratic rights for the people brings nearer the time when, faced as the Spanish people are to-day, with the alternatives of making democracy real or submitting to military dictatorship, the people will be in a position of such unity and organisational strength that they will be able to defend their democracy and make it ever more real, as the people succeeded in doing in Russia some twenty years ago.

THE END